



THE TWO EYES OF THE EARTH

ART AND RITUAL OF KINGSHIP BETWEEN ROME AND SASANIAN IRAN

MATTHEW P. CANEPA



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—Dante, *Inferno*

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The Two Eyes of the Earth

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The Two Eyes of the Earth

*Art and Ritual of Kingship between
Rome and Sasanian Iran*

MATTHEW P. CANEPA



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To Elizabeth

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Sources and Abbreviations

In reconstructing the ritual environments of the Roman and Sasanian courts and their interaction, this project analyzes a broad archive of texts, structures, objects, and images; however, the two fields of Roman/Byzantine studies and Middle Iranian studies have arrived at conflicting approaches to the use of textual material, and in order to carry out a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary project, these approaches have had to be reconciled. At the end of the last century, Philippe Gignoux advocated a hierarchy of sources that the field of Middle Iranian studies, and this project, generally accept: primary—documents written in the languages of, and at the same time as, the Sasanian empire; secondary—documents in the same languages but post-Sasanian; tertiary—documents in all other languages (including Greek and Latin texts from the Roman empire). Rika Gyselen expanded Gignoux's approach to include visual and archaeological material: unquestionably contemporary and authentic material such as rock reliefs, coins, archaeologically derived artifacts, and seals form the primary sources, and objects such as silver plate and silk, which lack provenance or come from post-Sasanian manufacture, form the secondary and tertiary sources. Conclusions relying only on secondary and tertiary documents should not be the basis for specific or fundamental claims and should always defer to primary sources when possible.

By necessity, this approach must be modified to deal with questions of

See P. Gignoux, "Problèmes de distinction et de priorité des sources," in *Prolegomena to the Sources on the History of Pre-Islamic Central Asia*, ed. J. Harmatta (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979), 137–41; id., "Pour une nouvelle histoire de l'Iran sassanide," in *Middle Iranian Studies*, ed. W. Skalmowski and A. van Tongerloo, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 16 (Leuven: Peeters, 1984), 253–62. For consideration of seals as a primary source, see R. Gyselen, "La désignation territoriale des quatre *Spāhbed* de l'empire sassanide," *StudIr* 30 (2001): 137–41.

cross-cultural (and cross-disciplinary) interaction. My methodological goal has been to find a middle ground between stringent Middle-Iranian scholarship, which would discount the Roman and Byzantine scholarship entirely, because it relies on non-Sasanian sources, and Roman and Byzantine studies' over-privileging of Greek and Latin textual sources when dealing with the Sasanian empire, all while integrating visual and archaeological evidence on an equal footing with textual evidence. Thus I do not hesitate to consider "tertiary" textual or visual evidence, but classify the strength of the conclusions one can draw from it according to this amended hierarchy of sources.

Conventions and abbreviations for all Iranian material conform as far as possible to those used by *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (*Elr*). Corresponding to *Elr*, the names of Sasanian kings of kings are in their New Persian, rather than Middle Persian, form (Šāpūr for Šābuhr, Bahrām for Wahrām, etc.). The transliteration system for New Persian and Arabic is that jointly adopted by *Encyclopaedia Iranica* and the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*. Pahlavi material follows D. N. MacKenzie's *Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*. Abbreviations for Greek and Latin authors conform to those of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* first; then, for sources not covered in the *OCD*, the conventions (though not necessarily the editions) used in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (*ODB*). For modern scholarly material, I follow the abbreviations in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* and suggested by Dumbarton Oaks (the latter are available in pdf format at doaks.org). Abbreviations not included in these lists or needing clarification I include below. All translations in the text are my own unless indicated.

<i>AchHist</i>	<i>Achaemenid History.</i>
<i>AcOr</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia.</i>
<i>ActIr</i>	<i>Acta Iranica.</i>
<i>BAI</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Asia Institute.</i>
<i>Bal'ami, Tārik</i>	<i>Tārik-e Bal'amī.</i> Edited by M. T. Bahār. Tehran: Edāra-ye Koll-e Negāreš-e Wezārat-e Farhang, 1341/1962.
<i>Bundahišn</i>	<i>Bundahišn.</i> Edited by B. T. Anklesaria. Bombay: British India Press, Byculla, 1908.
<i>CambHistIr</i>	<i>Cambridge History of Iran.</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam.</i> New ed. 13 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
<i>Elr</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica.</i> Edited by E. Yarshater. London and Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 1982–. www.iranica.com .

Ḥamza	Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī. "The Annals of Ḥamzah al-Iṣfahānī." Translated by U. M. Daupota. <i>Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute</i> 21 (1932): 58–120.
IrAnt	<i>Iranica Antiqua</i> .
IrDenk	<i>Iranische Denkmäler</i> . Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag for the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Teheran, 1932–.
Jāḥiẓ	Pseudo-al-Jāḥiẓ. <i>Le livre de la couronne</i> . Translated by C. Pellat. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1954.
KKZ	Kerdīr, Ka'ba-ye Zardošt inscription.
LTUR	<i>Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae</i> . Edited by E. M. Steinby. Rome: Quasar, 1993–.
Mas'ūdī, Murūj Barbier	al-Mas'ūdī. <i>Murūj al-dahab</i> . Translated by C. de Meynard. In <i>Les Prairies d'Or</i> , vol. 4. Paris: L'Imprimerie Impériale, 1865.
MedAnt	<i>Mediterraneo Antico</i> .
NPEA	<i>Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike</i> . Edited by H. Cancik und H. Schneider. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1996–2003.
NPi	Narseh, Paikuli inscription.
Perses sassanides	<i>Les Perses sassanides: Fastes d'un empire oublié (224–642)</i> , Musée des arts de l'Asie de la ville de Paris, 15 septembre–30 décembre 2006. Paris: Paris Musées; Suilly-la-Tour: Éditions Findakly, 2006.
Persia e Bisanzio	<i>Convengo Internazionale La Persia e Bisanzio (Roma: 14–18 ottobre 2002)</i> . Atti dei Convengi Lincei 201. Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2004.
Skjærvø, Paikuli	<i>The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli</i> , pt. 3.1. Restored text and translation by Prods O. Skjærvø. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1983.
ŠKZ	Šāpūr I, Ka'ba-ye Zardošt inscription = <i>Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I. an der Ka'ba-i Zardušt (ŠKZ)</i> . Edited and translated by P. Huyse. <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum</i> 3.1. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1999.
ŠN	Ferdowsī. <i>Šāhnāma</i> = <i>Shah-nāme</i> . Edited by A. E. Bertels. 9 vols. Moscow: Izd-vo Vostochnoi Lit-ry, 1960–71.

- Ṭaʿālebī, Ġorar Ġorar *aḵbār molūk al-fors* [of Ṭaʿālebīš]. Edited and translated by H. Zotenberg. In *Histoire des rois Perses*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900.
- des*
- Zamyād Yašt *Zamyād Yasht: Yasht 19 of the Younger Avesta: Text, Translation, Commentary*. Edited by H. Humbach and P. R. Ichaporia. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998.

1 Introduction

God effected that the whole world should be illumined from the very beginning by two eyes, namely by the most powerful kingdom of the Romans and by the most prudent scepter of the Persian State. For by these greatest powers the disobedient and bellicose tribes are winnowed and man's course is continually regulated and guided.

ƁOSROW II, in a letter to the Roman emperor Maurice, in *Theophylakt Simokatta* 4.11.2–3, trans. Whitby

With this cosmic metaphor, a Sasanian king of kings, Ɓosrow II, articulated the Roman and Sasanian empires' shared ideal of the universal, ancient, and sacred nature of their cultures' kingship, where the king mediated between heaven and earth. These conceptions of kingship, while often generating conflict, drove exchange between the two cultures, especially with regard to the main tools that the Roman and Iranian courts utilized to project their conceptions of universal rule: elaborate systems of ritual, and visual, architectural, and urban environments. This book focuses on a pivotal period in political and religious history, poised between the ancient and medieval worlds in the Mediterranean and the Near East, and offers an analysis of the conditions and motivations that enabled these two hostile systems of sacred universal sovereignty not only to coexist, but to foster cross-cultural exchange and communication even in the face of an undying rivalry.

This book is not intended as a history of diplomatic, economic, institutional, or military dealings between the Roman and Sasanian empires, although those topics enter into its consideration.¹ Rather, this is a study of how the two greatest cultural, political, and military forces in the late antique Mediterranean and Near East devised a sacral, yet extrareligious visual and ritual language of legitimacy and debate to communicate and compete over the course of their coexistence (224–642). It examines the two empires' motivations and methods for appropriating the creations of each other's court culture. Thus this study focuses on expressions that often inhabit the margins of cultural identity. Images, performances, and ideologies of kingship, in fact, often present some dissonance when compared with the bare facts of power. Indeed, the dissonance between historical fact and ideological fiction often illuminates what lies behind the rhetoric. It is in the wordless self-descriptive language of art and ritual that we gain access to

the regimes' religiously extracanonical, yet very real understandings of their cosmological place.

Cross-cultural interaction between late antique Rome and Iran is a subject that has received scholarly attention that can be described only as either cursory and infrequent or downright problematic. Although a number of studies have gestured across cultural lines, a sustained cross-cultural examination of late antique Roman and Sasanian imperial art and ritual has never been carried out, due, in part, to modern disciplinary divides, the relative obscurity of the languages of the primary sources, and, since 1979, the difficulty of conducting research in Iran.² The curatorship of the material and the scholarly literature have diverged along modern disciplinary lines, with historians interested mostly in questions of military and diplomatic interactions, and art historians sporadically touching upon a few formal parallels. Furthermore, research into the motivations, practices, and consequences of cross-cultural interaction has largely been left to theorists working in contemporary cultural studies.

In the preliminary stages of this study, I became aware of difficulties and omissions concerning the visual and ritual interchanges between the Roman and Sasanian empires. With one or two exceptions, the few previous studies relating to this subject parsed out evidence of cross-cultural interaction from the larger visual and ideological developments occurring in Rome and Sasanian Iran, ghettoizing it and effectively reinforcing an idea of a cultural "iron curtain" between the two political and cultural realms. It became increasingly clear that a new theoretical model that could speak to the specific problems of the historical situation and subject was not only desirable in and of itself but necessary to make sense of the evidence, both visual and textual, which suggests a complexity of interaction much deeper than the traditional explanations of a passive movement of objects from silk trade and war booty would allow.³ I began to think about this problem of cross-cultural interaction not just in relation to commerce or war, but in terms of a commerce of ideas and identities, that is, how the two empires constructed their individual imperial identities and expressed power. I discovered that the two empires' relationship was very closely intertwined with their internal self-conceptions.

Unlike previous studies, which have focused on formal parallels attributed to a passive osmosis of tribute, booty, gifts, and trade, this work concentrates on the cultural processes and practices that drove exchange and facilitated communication between the two realms, encompassing both friendly interchange and hostile, agonistic statements of competition. I ar-

gue that a hybrid, international culture of kingship developed from their interactions, and the two realms creatively recrafted it in a competitive, yet mutual process of agonistic exchange. The Sasanian and Roman sovereigns encountered each other's cultural and ideological goods, expressed competitive claims, observed the resulting interchange, and ultimately remodeled themselves in response to these visual and ritual assertions.

This study offers an approach to Sasanian and Roman royal interaction that considers the visual material in context with other expressive elements of Sasanian and Roman kingship, such as ritual and discursive enunciations of power. Such an approach is as useful for studying the two realms' interaction as it is for understanding their expressions individually. Examining the visual evidence of cross-cultural interaction as an expressive element contextualizes it within the larger processes of imperial identity formation that drove the exchange, and places the motivations for cross-cultural interaction at the center of discourse.⁴ Although I apply the same theoretical vocabulary to the Roman and Sasanian material, this does not mean that I automatically assume complete equivalency for any and every ritual or artistic practice. Rather, the application of a common vocabulary is a methodological tool meant to highlight and articulate the dissimilarities and novel approaches between the two realms as much as the common solutions and conversations, and more clearly delineate the impact of cross-cultural interaction on the realms' indigenous ritual-visual practices.

I begin with the Sasanians' rise from a regional dynasty to a great imperial power. With respect to the Romans' own perceptions of history and Rome's tenure as Mediterranean hegemon, I start somewhat in the middle of things: twenty years after the creation of the Sasanian empire, the emperor Philip would celebrate the city of Rome's millennial birthday. While the rise of the first Sasanian king in 224 and the death of the last in 651 are logical limits for a study of the Sasanian empire, these dates inscribe a somewhat nontraditional temporal division onto the Roman realm. Confronted by the great variety of changes in Roman culture, many have succumbed to a temptation to reify boundaries in the continuum of Roman history by inventing names for them, usually in a hortatory and oppositional sense, such as Principate versus Dominate or Roman versus Byzantine, obscuring the Romans' native sense of the continuity of their culture.⁵ On the other hand, the Roman empire's relentless rhetoric of continuity has also enabled portrayals of late Roman culture as static and unchanging.⁶

The four centuries on which this study focuses saw vast changes in both realms. The late Roman and Sasanian empires both experienced a shift in

their cultural center of gravity with Rome's loss of its Western provinces and the concomitant rise of Constantinople, and the Mesopotamian capital of Ctesiphon eventually overshadowing the Sasanian dynasty's homeland of Pārs as the symbolic center of the empire.⁷ Both empires saw increasing centralization at the expense of local power bases, with sixth-century contemporaries Justinian I and Kōsrow I responsible for intensifying this movement to autocracy in their respective realms.⁸ While the Roman and Sasanian cultures became ever more focused on the court and sovereign, the arena of competition in which the two powers met and engaged broadened, moving well beyond the borderlands to encompass much of Eurasia; the two realms' political intrigues against each other extended into the outer reaches of Central Asia, Ethiopia, and the Indian Ocean. The demography of both realms also changed considerably. Invasions of nomadic peoples and wartime deportations altered the ethnic and religious makeup of provinces and cities, and, while it affected the Roman empire much more profoundly, Christianity emerged as a demographic and political force in both empires.

Open warfare punctuated by battlefield negotiations was the hallmark of the initial seven decades of the empires' coexistence.⁹ During this period of open hostility, the empires could view each other as a barbarous "other." After Diocletian put the Roman empire back on its feet, a new military parity in turn allowed the emergence of a more fraternal relationship between the two realms and the development of a sophisticated system of diplomacy. The sovereigns' newly formed fraternal relationship endured even the hostilities that emerged again in the fourth century between Šāpūr II and Constantius II and Julian. The fifth and early sixth centuries brought the courts even closer together, with the symbolic familial relationships even extending into more tangible relationships. By the age of Kōsrow I and Justinian I, this relationship was part of the customary state of affairs and could even be cast as ancient and divinely ordained. The final transformative conflicts that emerged within and between the two empires in the seventh century vastly altered both and in many important ways laid the groundwork for Islam and the European Middle Ages.

Perhaps there are more convenient starting points for an analysis of Roman imperial art and ritual both before and after the beginning of the two empires' coexistence, but this rude interruption of the unfolding of Roman history is part of the problem that this book seeks to address. The Sasanians disrupted the status quo and became one of the more important external forces driving change in Roman culture. Unlike many attempts to divide Roman history into periods, this study makes no claim for its temporal span other than that it represents the period during which the Romans and

the Sasanian dynasty coexisted. The endpoint of this study marks a more clear division. Along with the death of the last Sasanian king of kings, the rise of Islam extinguished the Sasanian empire and drastically altered the geographical and demographic composition of the Roman empire.¹⁰ Both cultures ceased to exist as they once did, although their traditions of kingship and cross-cultural interaction lived on in their Islamic and Iconoclast successors.¹¹

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2 The Art and Ritual of Kingship within and between Rome and Sasanian Iran

A strange occurrence at a routine diplomatic reception provides an intriguing starting point for considering the basis of Roman and Sasanian kingship and their interaction. It illustrates both the ritually charged nature of environments that grew up around the two sovereigns and the often quite unexpected possibilities that arose from them:

When [Sēbuxt, the Sasanian envoy] came, Justin [II] proved not amenable to him especially since, when he entered to make the customary obeisance to the emperor, as he threw himself on the ground the cap which he wore on his head after the Persian manner happened to fall to the floor. The high officials and the rest, taking this as a good omen, flattered the emperor and excited him to think that Persia would soon submit to him.¹

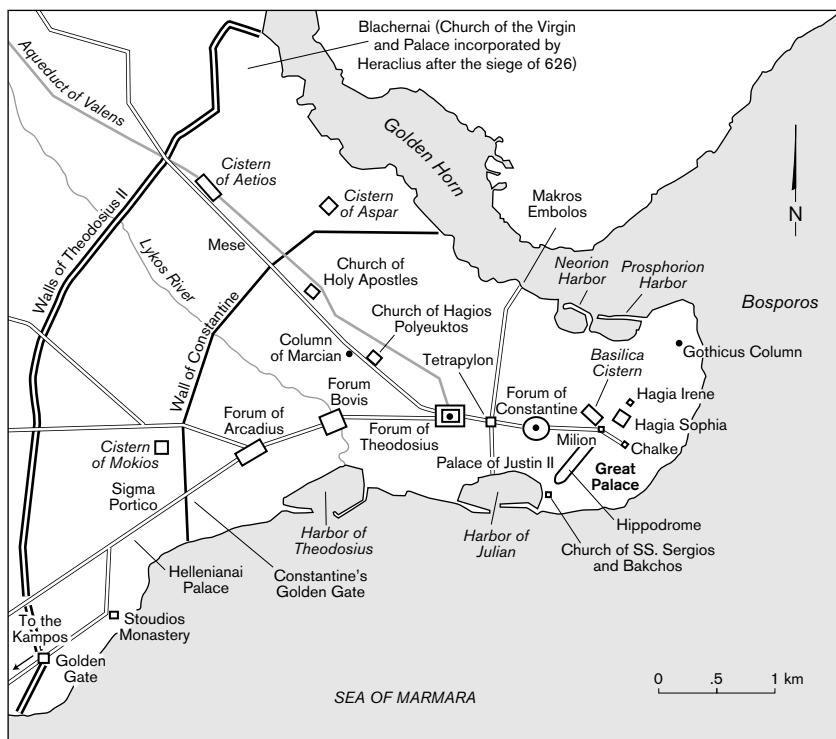
As this quote from Menander illustrates, in order to understand their full power, Roman and Sasanian art and architecture of power cannot be studied in isolation but must be approached in the context provided by the web of visual, spatial, and ritual correspondences in which they participated.

In marked contrast to the present status of surviving ancient art objects, which subsist now in sterile gallery or museum environments, Roman and Sasanian artistic material (including art objects, clothing, and architectural and urban elements) was originally related to and inextricable from the lush fabric of ritual practice that both cultures created and enacted over the centuries.² Art objects and urban spaces served alongside a shifting host of other independent, yet ritually linked elements, which involved participants and onlookers alike aurally (with the blast of an organ or a roar of acclamation), olfactorily (the smell of burning frankincense and myrrh in braziers or sacred fires), gustatorily (the tastes of delicacies apportioned to a privileged guest from the imperial table), ludically (the excitement of hippodrome races

or polo), haptically (the tactile sensation of a silk garment given in an investiture), or somatically (the physical sensation of lowering one's body in obeisance). Quite apart from its previous history, physical qualities, original intended function, or origin, an object, image, structure, or urban space, once linked to imperial ritual, performed work in that ritual and became a necessary element in it.³

Through art and ritual, Roman and Sasanian sovereigns could communicate complex, multivalent, even contradictory, messages about their identity. Imperial art and architecture developed reciprocally and interdependently with imperial art, as well as serving alongside it.⁴ Sovereigns created architectural and visual environments with the knowledge that they would provide a focus for ritual activities. These ritual activities, in turn, commented on and shaped further additions and interventions. As the ritual and artistic elements of imperial ceremony were interwoven, it is not surprising that an alteration in the fabric of one had implications for that of the other. A change in ritual practice could imply a new meaning for a structure, and new structures or images within a ritual environment could modify the performance and significance of a ritual.

The accessions of Roman and Sasanian sovereigns provide illuminating examples of how differentially they used expressive events to mold their realm's urban or even provincial topography around their particular vision of kingship and appropriated the significance of important spaces by tying them into large-scale expressive events. In the fifth and early sixth centuries, as successions in the later Roman empire became more stable and the emperors left the new capital of Constantinople less frequently, the city, its history and institutions, and the spaces that represented them became increasingly important components of imperial ritual (see map 1).⁵ The accession ceremony of Leo I in 457, the first accession of the fifth century of which we have a detailed account, encompassed most of the old military elements but now folded these into civic and Christian liturgical forms of expression.⁶ Although Leo I's accession ceremony unfolded over the course of a day at more than ten different sites—miles apart—around Constantinople and within the walls of the Great Palace, it was evidently considered a single expressive event. Ritual practice organized this diverse assemblage of locations into a harmonious semantic whole and negotiated the emperor's relationship with the empire's various divine and human power sources by ritually reinterpreting the city of Constantinople's topography and ritual traditions. Processions by horse, chariot, or foot provided the contiguous linkages between both prominent and relatively obscure sites in the diverse itinerary. This "sacred itinerary" in turn implied that there was a mean-



Map 1. Constantinople, early seventh century.

ingful connection between the person of the newly elected emperor and the various social, sacral, and historical significances of the sites themselves and the ritual actions performed there. This accession ceremony includes roughly the same features as the Tetrarchic ceremonies of more than a century and a half earlier; the process of enfolding Christian sites, personages, and prayers was itself an important means of joining religious innovation with the imperial court's overwhelming need to express continuity.⁷

Leo I's accession ceremony commenced before a select assembly of senators, court officials, troops, and palace guards as well as the patriarch outside the walls at the Hebdomon, a suburb located seven Roman miles west from the city center, marked by the Milion, Constantinople's golden milestone.⁸ The Hebdomon was the site of the Kampos, the Constantinopolitan Campus Martius, where a tribunal had been fashioned.⁹ There, on the tribunal surrounded by military standards and *labara*, the emperor received a military crowning with a torque by representatives of the army, and the

acclamation of the troops.¹⁰ Then, under the cover of his bodyguard's shields Leo was invested with the imperial diadem and clothes (presumably the purple *paludamentum*) and emerged to another acclamation.¹¹ He then received a shield and lance and received ritual obeisance (*proskynēsis*) from all.¹² At this point, the accession ceremony, which had developed as a self-standing ritual in the Tetrarchy, became mobile, using the forms of the equally venerable ritual of imperial *adventus*, to bring the emperor meaningfully into the city. In fact, the description of Leo's accession breaks off at this point, and the author appears to have adapted a much older work and grafted it onto the text to describe the imperial *adventus*.¹³ The shift in the source here likely reflects the composite manner in which the late Roman court constructed the ceremony. Leo then set out for the city on a white horse, first stopping at the church of St. John the Baptist at the Hebdomon, which housed the head of the saint.¹⁴ There he ritually offered his diadem on the altar and gave a donation to the church, thus establishing a ritual association between himself and the illustrious Theodosian dynasty. Although the text details the route only from its Constantinian prototype onward, Leo likely entered the city through the Theodosian Golden Gate, which had taken over the Constantinian original's role as the main portal into the city for imperial triumph and *adventus*.¹⁵ According to the mid-fifth-century topography of the city, Leo would have processed through vast Theodosian fora before arriving at the Hellenianai palace on the seventh hill, where the military flavor of the ceremony began to take on a more civilian character.¹⁶ At the palace the emperor greeted the palace staff and changed out of the military costume that he had worn up to this point and into the imperial "civilian" costume.¹⁷

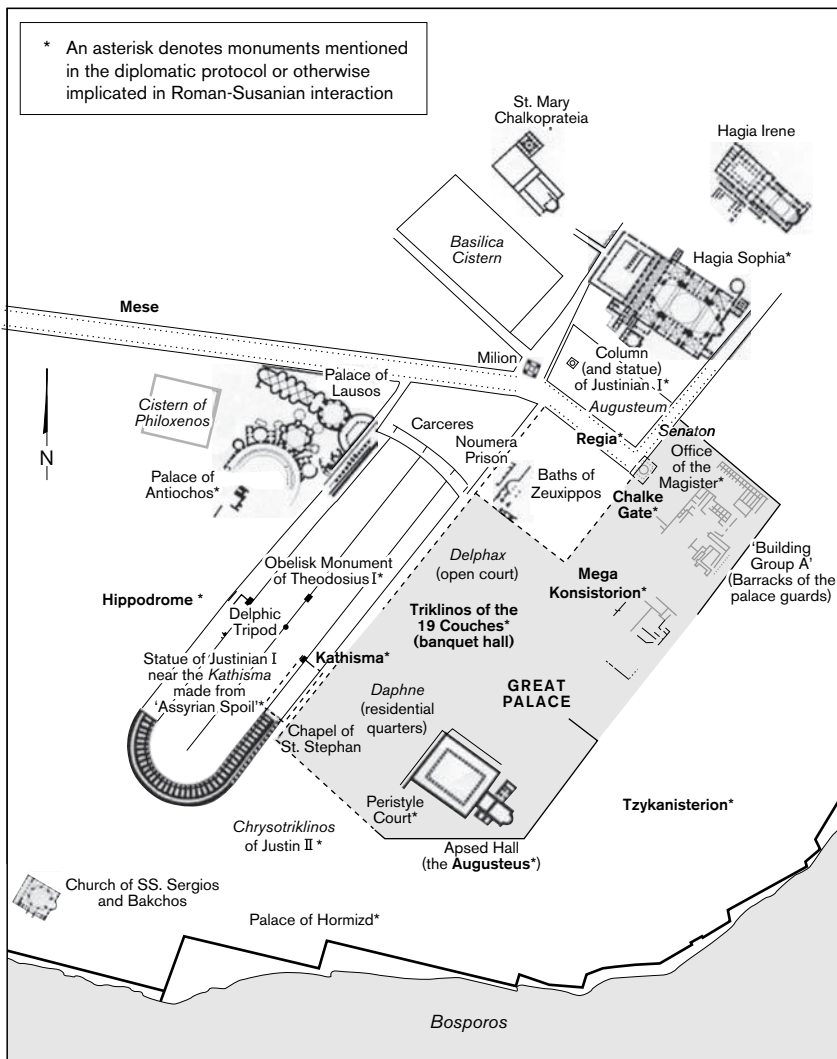
Here the emperor left his white horse to travel by chariot through the Constantinian Golden Gate into the symbolic heart of the city, where he would ritually reaffirm the emperor's relationship to the capital at sites that held civil, ecclesiastical, and imperial significance.¹⁸ At the Forum of Constantine, one of the preeminent imperial sites of the city, he met the city prefect and was ritually incarnated as a "new Constantine" under the monumental porphyry column carrying the statue of the city's founder.¹⁹ He then traveled, again by chariot, to Hagia Sophia, at this point the city's cathedral church, grafting imperial ritual onto the Christian liturgy. The text makes it clear that the emperor entered the sanctuary, an action that, within the logic of the ritual, portrays the emperor as a consecrated clergy member.²⁰ In the course of the liturgy the emperor made another ritual offering of his crown on the high altar and was recrowned by the patriarch.²¹ After leaving Hagia Sophia, he processed across the Augustaion toward the Great

Palace.²² There the Rēgia, an offshoot of the Mesē, the city's major thoroughfare, turned toward the gate of the Great Palace (see map 2). In the controlled space that this portico-lined street offered the public space of the city merged with the hidden world of the palace grounds.²³ In this physical and symbolic liminal zone, members of the senate greeted the emperor, and those of the palace guards who remained to watch the imperial residence honored him with *proskynēsis*.²⁴ Once within the palace walls the emperor processed to an audience hall (*konsistōrion*), where the court officials swore oaths to him.²⁵ The events then concluded at the *mega triklinon*, where he presided over a banquet.²⁶

While the ritual took into account many "timeless" spaces and structures, this particular accession reflected the specific concerns of its point in late Roman history. Leo's particular ritual reinscription of space is best seen as a single expression along a developmental spectrum, varying like other imperial accessions topographically, religiously, and demographically. The extant records of the accessions of the majority of emperors who orchestrated or later celebrated their election in Constantinople show a consistent oscillation between the city's important sites of power, with the Hebdomon, the Hippodrome, Hagia Sophia, and the interior of the Great Palace all appearing in different combinations. The records of Tetrarchic elections—those of Justin I, Justinian I, Justin II, and the sons of Heraclius—are all different, yet share a similar ritual sensibility and show how imperial uses of art, architecture, and ritual performed an important role in mediating the constantly shifting conformation of military, urban, and aristocratic power.²⁷ Many other imperial activities, including triumphs, depositions, liturgical celebrations, and audiences, provide further examples of this creative reinscription of space.

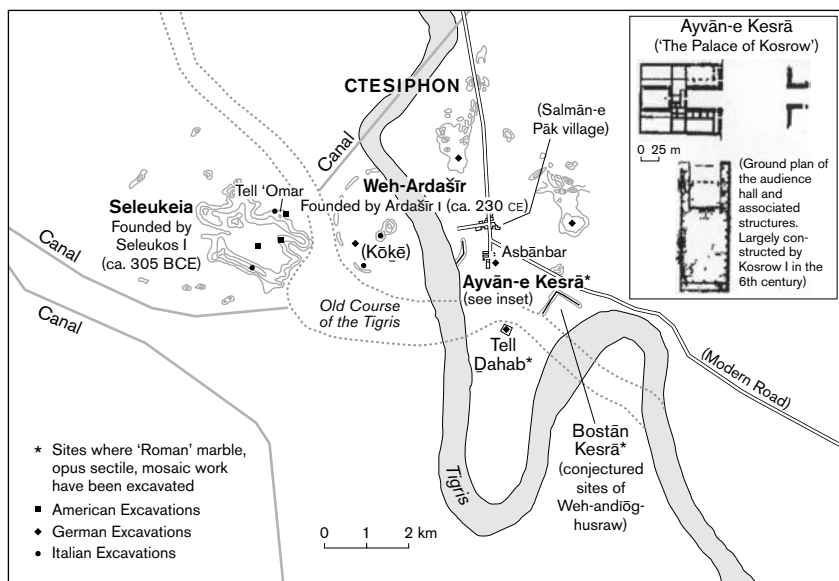
Although far less information exists for the Sasanian empire, and one must speak more generally, we can nevertheless sketch a picture of Sasanian ceremonial movement between sites. Much like the Roman accessions, the primary goal of the Sasanian rituals was to mediate between the realm's various power bases and ritually appropriate structures and spaces that were significant to Sasanian kingship. Unlike their late Roman counterparts, Sasanian royal accession rituals were not limited to a single city. Sasanian accession ceremonies often encompassed several sites throughout the empire. After Ardāšīr I's coronation in 226, following his triumph over the last Parthian king, the Sasanian kings of kings traveled to Ctesiphon, the empire's capital city, for their coronations (see map 3).

The kings traditionally held their coronation ceremonies on one of the two great holidays of the Zoroastrian calendar, which fell on the spring



Map 2. Great Palace of Constantinople, early seventh century.

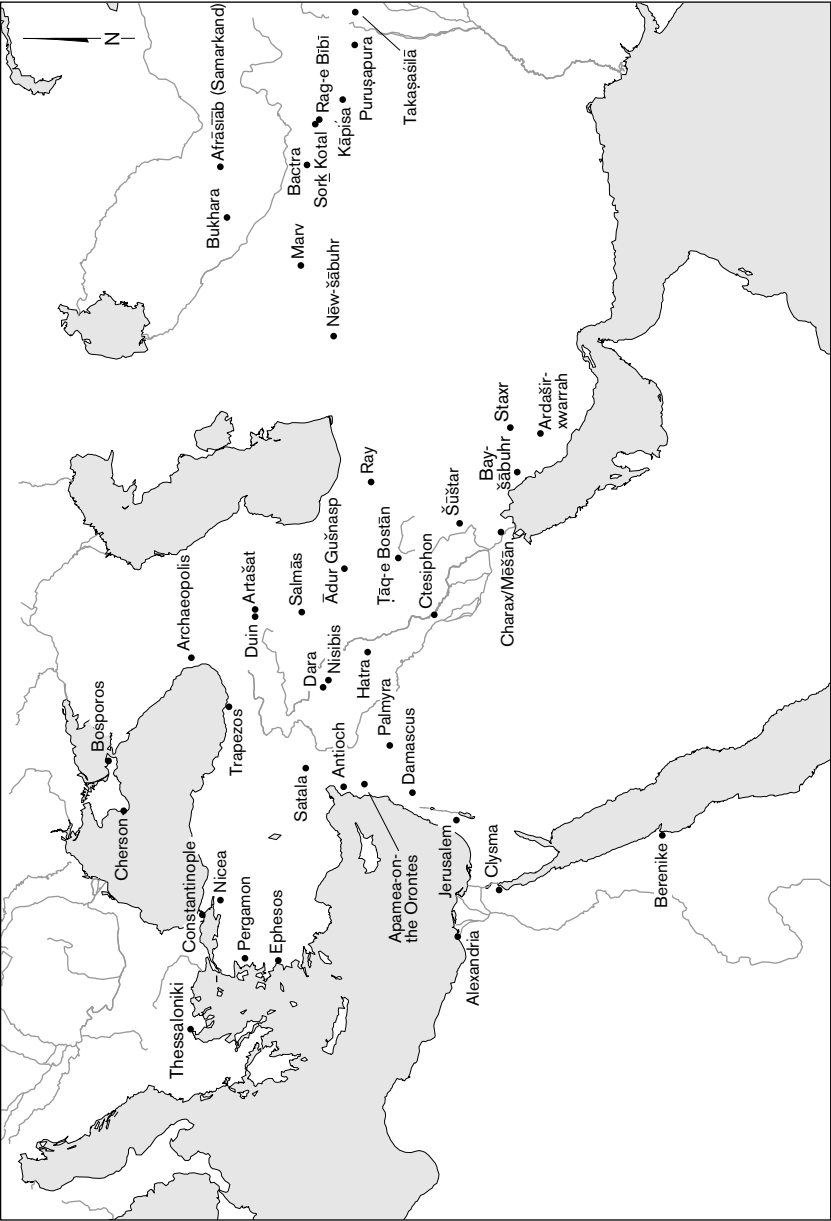
and fall equinoxes: the spring “New Year” festival (N. Pers. *Nowrūz*) and Mīhrīgān (N. Pers. *Mehrgān*), the festival of Mithra.²⁸ Both feasts offered the possibility of linking the sovereigns to primordial kings or heroes and the deep workings of the cosmos.²⁹ The celebration of *Nowrūz* was central to many Iranian cultures and became exceptionally symbolically dense in the late Zoroastrian tradition. The day collected the great events of the world:



Map 3. Ctesiphon and ground plan of the Ayvān-e Kesrā with sites of twentieth-century excavations.

creation, revelation of the Good Religion, and postapocalyptic renovation of the world.³⁰ New Year coronation was a custom that the primordial king Yima (N. Pers. *Jamšēd*) was understood to have begun. With its long-standing power to reestablish order out of chaos and renew all things, both cosmic and mundane, the event provided many possibilities for casting heavenly shadows over earthly events.³¹ Mihrīgān was also occasionally chosen, again following a precedent set by a primordial king and hero, this time Frēdōn (Av. *Θraētaona*), who freed the Airiia by slaying the foreign dragon-king Žaḥḥāk (Av. *Aži Dahāka*).³² The early Sasanian kings either crowned themselves or, if elected by their predecessor, were crowned by him; though from the reign of Bahrām V (420–438) onward it is possible that the chief priest of the empire, the *mowbedān mowbed*, performed the coronation, reflecting the growing assertiveness of the Zoroastrian clergy.³³

From at least the early fifth century a tradition emerged whereby the newly crowned king would embark on a pilgrimage from the site of his coronation in Ctesiphon to the sanctuary of Ādur Gušnasp in Azerbaijan (see map 4).³⁴ The sanctuary, known today by its Islamic place-name, Taḳt-e Solaymān, held one of the most sacred fires in Iranian religious tradition.³⁵ Ādur Gušnasp was not only an *ātaxš ī wahrām*, the highest grade of fire,



Map 4. Eastern Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, and Iran during late antiquity.

but one of the three great fires of Iran, which were understood to have existed since ancient times.³⁶ Iranian tradition held that Ohrmazd created Ādur Gušnasp, along with Ādur Farnbāg and Ādur Burzēn-Mihr, “for the protection of the world.”³⁷ Although all were holy, through special reverence and lavish patronage the Sasanian kings increased the prestige of Ādur Gušnasp over that of Ādur Burzēn-Mihr, the fire that their erstwhile Parthian overlords favored.³⁸ The Sasanian kings traveled to Ādur Gušnasp by horse; however, at the sanctuary’s walls they dismounted and entered on foot as a sign of humility and respect.³⁹ Through the contiguous link this sacred itinerary established the Sasanian kings anchored the traditions and rituals of the coronation to the primordial weight of Ādur Gušnasp. This long-distance link, in turn, associated the Sasanian kings’ temporal coronations with the royal sacral significances of the site, first among which was the mythological arrival of the once itinerant fire at the site to aid their mythical Kayānid “ancestor,” Kay Husraw, in wresting it from the forces of darkness.⁴⁰ There they would lavish rich gifts on the sanctuary, an act that the kings would often repeat over the course of their reign when praying for victory or giving thanksgiving.⁴¹ According to the *Šāhnāma*, after his victory over Bahrām Čobin, Kōsrow II spent a week at the site circumambulating the fire while reciting the Zand and Avesta, perhaps reflecting practices that the kings also enacted after their coronation process.⁴² The kings often spent several days at Ādur Gušnasp and maintained an audience hall at the site, implying a connection with another set of ritual practices.

While ritual inscribed new meanings on architectural or artistic material and created a large-scale ritual syntax, art and architecture also impacted the development and significance of activities within the ritual environment. The construction of a particularly prominent structure could alter the development of the ritual fabric. This is the case, as we saw, at the rebuilt sanctuary of Ādur Gušnasp, which drew to itself the previously unrelated rituals of royal accession and triumph. Despite the undeniable prominence of the Great Palace, within the city of Constantinople throughout the period under study, Justinian’s rebuilt Hagia Sophia drastically changed the character of imperial ceremony and aggregated to itself such previously non-Christian ceremonies as imperial coronations and triumphs, whose core activities had previously occurred at a diverse array of significant sites (see fig. 1).⁴³

The Sasanian practice of kindling and maintaining a regnal fire demonstrates another aspect of the royal fashioning of ritual-visual interaction. Although varying in many ways, the royal families of several Middle Iranian dynasties, from Anatolia to South Asia, including the Sasanians, established sanctuaries where the sovereign, his relatives, and ancestors, both



Figure 1. The Great Church of Hagia Sophia, dedicated 27 December 537; dome rebuilt and rededicated 24 December 562; patron: Justinian I (527–565). Diameter of dome: 31 m; height: 48.5 m; ground plan: 78 by 72 m, excluding narthexes. (Photo by author.)

actual and mythological, were honored in conjunction with cult rendered to the gods.⁴⁴ These dynastic sanctuaries were often monumental complexes sponsored directly by the king or his inner circle. Prominent examples include the hilltop funerary sanctuary of the Helleno-Iranian king of Commagene, Antiochus I, at Nemrut Dağı in present-day Turkey;⁴⁵ the Kušān sanctuaries at Sork Kotal in Afghanistan,⁴⁶ or Māt in India;⁴⁷ the Parthian sanctuaries at Nisa in Turkmenistan, and Kuh-e Kwāja⁴⁸ and Šami, in Iran;⁴⁹ pre-Christian Armenian sanctuaries attested in records;⁵⁰ and, eventually, the fires Šāpūr I founded with his inscriptions at Naqš-e Rostam.⁵¹ These sanctuaries grafted the implied ritual, and oftentimes visual, presence of the king onto cult practices rendered to the basic elements of Iranian religion, fire and water, thus associating the sovereign cultically and often visually with the gods. In most cases, images of the king and his ancestors, intermixed with those of the gods, surrounded a fire altar, establishing a clear contiguous link between the image and cult honoring the king and the images and cult honoring the gods, thus ritually expressing the king's divine nature. The early Sasanians participated in this phenomenon with a few very important modifications related to wider changes in cult practice: namely, the substitution of a sacred fire for images as the main focus of cult.⁵² Under the Sasanians, fire functioned as the Zoroastrian religion's preeminent

visual manifestation of the divine, and although they now eschewed cult statues, through contiguous linkages with this “living” icon the kings could still express complex statements.⁵³

Beginning with Ardašīr I, after the coronation of every Sasanian king a major fire (*ātaxš ī wahrām*) was established and tended throughout his reign.⁵⁴ The Sasanian kings normally set an image of their regnal fire on the reverse of their coins, which provides an idea of the visual environment around it: the fire was treated analogously with the king himself; it was “enthroned,” honored with diadems, and given other special ceremonial deference.⁵⁵ Drachms issued by Ardašīr I provide a simple representation of the regnal fire’s treatment.⁵⁶ The coins’ reverse depicts an altar encircled with royal diadems, enthroned on an Archaemenid-inspired lion-footed throne. In later issues, several other figures join the fire altar; coins from Šāpūr I until the end of the empire regularly depict two guardian figures flanking the altar.⁵⁷ These figures could depict ritual activities performed around the fire altar or images that surrounded it, closely associating the royal presence with the sacred fire.⁵⁸ Either ritually or visually, the kings of kings predicated their identity on the manifestly holy presence of the *ātaxš ī wahrām*. Although it is probable that there was one main dynastic fire tended in a sanctuary, the kings appear to have established many other fires at cities and significant sites throughout their empire for “the benefit of their souls.” If interpreted this way, Šāpūr I’s inscription at Naqš-e Rostam provides an epigraphic record of his foundation of fires and cult for himself, his family, his ancestors, and an impressive number of courtiers.⁵⁹ The practice of endowing a sacred fire for the benefit of the royal family was not limited to the king himself but was adopted by provincial aristocrats as well, quite possibly to distinguish themselves within their community. In these civic or domestic sanctuaries, the royal personages inhabited the same cultic space as the deities, and because of this, the rituals that honored the fire in effect also honored the king and his family’s semi-divine status.⁶⁰

Ritual implements were also subject to this type of ritual-visual manipulation. By including his image on one of the objects necessary to complete a ritual, the sovereign became an integral part of that ritual. Paul the Silentary describes Justinian I’s donation of a staggeringly rich altar cloth of purple silk for the altar of the Great Church. The altar cloth portrayed of the miracles of Christ interspersed with Justinian’s philanthropic works.⁶¹ The physical connection between the images implied an audacious functional equivalency between the works of Christ and the emperor. Paralleling this, a private fire altar found at Barm-e Delak depicts, on two of its four sides, Ardašīr I and Šāpūr I (identified by inscriptions) in poses similar to those

on the reverse of Šāpūr I's coins.⁶² This altar represents a smaller, compact version of the Iranian dynastic sanctuary, with relief images of the sovereigns on the altar itself rather than surrounding it.

As the quote above from Menander indicates, ritual was also susceptible to accidental additions, such as hats.⁶³ Since every motion, sound, smell, and sight within the environment was laden with meaning, any strange additions that escaped the court's best attempts to control the environment could be meaningful to a ritually trained eye. This was certainly the case in the late Roman audience hall that hosted the diplomatic drama recounted in Menander. In the Chrysotriklinos's semantically rich ritual environment, Justin II's courtiers' eagerness to interpret the ritual anomaly of the Sasanian envoy's cap falling makes sense, although their predictions were sadly misguided.⁶⁴ Because so many opportunities for new connections existed, ritual performance could be endlessly polysemantic. For ritual to be effective, however, this polysemy needed to be shaped and controlled.⁶⁵ In the Roman and Sasanian empires, the imperial elite enthusiastically and jealously executed their prerogative to form and shape ritual.⁶⁶ In guarding what went on within and around their empire's most significant structures and spaces they controlled access to the symbolism of power.

It is not surprising that the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns strove to maintain strict control over these ritual spaces. Some of the most dramatic instances of social upheaval and usurpation were accompanied or even instigated by equally dramatic seizures of symbolically charged structures and spaces. Since the major fire sanctuaries served as ideological bulwarks in the Iranian world, the Sasanian dynasty exerted strong control over the sanctuaries of their defeated rivals. After his successful usurpation Ardašīr I went to great lengths to impose symbolic as well as military control over his new empire. Whereas the Parthian kings allowed their vassals to found their own dynastic fires, Ardašīr destroyed the dynastic sanctuaries of all vassal kings, allowing only those that were founded with his authorization and celebrated his dynasty. Referring to Ardašīr I's reorganization of Armenia, Movses Khorenats'i writes:

[Ardašīr I] increased the cults of the temples and ordered the fire of [Ohrmazd], which was on the altar at [Bagawan] to be kept perpetually burning. But the statues that [Vālaršak] had set up as the images of his ancestors with those of the sun and the moon at Armavir, and which had been transferred from Armavir to Bagaran and then brought to [Artašat], these [Ardašīr I] broke up.⁶⁷

The sixth-century Nika riot provides one of the best-documented examples of the power of these contested spaces in the late Roman empire.⁶⁸ When

Constantinople's factions prevailed upon the previous emperor's nephews, Hypatius and Pompeius, to seize the purple, they took them to the Forum of Constantine, where they performed an impromptu coronation for Hypatius.⁶⁹ Indeed, the lure of another grand imperial space—the hippodrome—was too great to resist, and the insurrectionists' desire to install Hypatius on the city's preeminent imperial stage rather than a fortified palace ultimately spelled their doom. Against the advice of one of the more prudent senators, who suggested that the new emperor should shut himself in one of the city's fortified, yet symbolically (and ritually) undistinguished palaces to prepare for the inevitable conflict with Justinian, the mob and the newly elected emperor demanded that they take over the *kathisma*, the most important public point of contact between the emperor and the populace.⁷⁰ There, in a symbolically powerful yet militarily indefensible space, Justinian's two generals were able to advance upon the crowd, killing reportedly more than thirty thousand, and succeeded in capturing the usurpers and quashing the rebellion.⁷¹

Control over the ritual and visual environment meant control over the constituent elements of reality and the ability to conserve or change cultural experience. Because they animated and gave meaning to many other culturally significant elements, art and ritual were key tools that the Romans and Sasanians utilized to project power over their populations and consolidate their position at the apex. Through this ritual-visual nexus, the emperors controlled such basic elements of their society's reality as the progression of time, through control of the calendar, and access to the divine, through formulations of religious orthodoxy and *orthopraxis*, although this was often contested with the priestly elite.⁷² The ritual and visual environments that supported Roman and Sasanian kingship were not mere trappings of power but the means by which the two empires integrated change into a coherent narrative, transformed naked force into the practice of legitimate authority, and adapted to their cultures new challenges.⁷³

In both realms the frequent and brutal application of military might and torture and the display of gruesome mutilations remained the customary counterbalance and underpinning of the more glamorous economy of festivals, silk and gold. In addition to the remains of Sasanian law books, the Syriac *Acts of the Persian Martyrs* provide some of the most horrifically vivid catalogues of the techniques of Sasanian prisons.⁷⁴ The *Letter of Tansar* discusses the king's use of tortures involving trampling by elephants, cauldrons of boiling lead, and crucifixion in the same breath as his sumptuary laws and likens them to "bitter medicines and burning cauteries and cruel incisions," which are necessary to bring the human body back to health.⁷⁵

In Iranian noble society, honor was lodged in the body; therefore the body itself had to be truly and commensurately disfigured. Physical deformity or blindness in one or both eyes excluded one from the kingship.⁷⁶ Sasanian kings of kings routinely blinded their rivals by enucleation or cauterization or through boiling liquid to disqualify them from the throne, a practice and cultural understanding that became widespread in Constantinople beginning in the early eighth century.⁷⁷

In Corippus's oration, Justin II likens violence against dissenters to salutary medical treatment: "[The head of the body] watches the limbs with calm eyes so that whatever limbs it sees in the body below sick with disease, as it watches carefully with wakeful light, it can cure them and drive away hostile sickness with drugs."⁷⁸ Along with the magistrate, ushers, and heralds, all decked out in their finery, the judicial staff sent to try a Laz king for "defection to the Persians" included a detachment of professionals, "who [. . .] carried with them iron collars, racks and various other instruments of torture."⁷⁹ Considering how visually attuned these societies were to visual marks of distinction, it is not surprising that they favored particularly visual methods of disfigurement for punishment, to mark a body as evil embodied.⁸⁰

Roman culture initially had a less urgent need to inflict dishonor directly on the body, though the practice became more common in late antiquity to the point that Justinian had to regulate its use.⁸¹ The heads of defeated usurpers on a pike became an expected centerpiece of a victory parade in the fourth century, and thereafter the bodies of defeated rival emperors received increasingly horrific punishment. Usurpers and rivals were the embodiment of all that was evil—the inversion of the order constituted by the emperor in power.⁸² After overthrowing the usurper Phocas,

Heraklios decreed that he [Phocas] be put to the sword and then that he should be mutilated, namely, that his right arm should be amputated at the shoulder joint and his genitals be cut off and [these members] be affixed to poles, and that his body should be dragged in this condition to the so called marketplace of the Bull and be consigned to the fire. He also ordered that Domentiolos, the brother of Phocas, Bonossos, and Leontios, the imperial treasurer, should undergo the same penalty as Phocas. These matters, then happened in this manner.⁸³

Violence and coercion drove the two cultures' systems of honors, and any use of terms such as "symbolic capital" must be tempered with the knowledge that, as well as a desire for distinction and prestige, a very real threat of violence remained the central force that gave weight to these systems. In

other words, one must always assume violence as the precursor and guarantor of these symbolic hierarchical systems and social orders.

AGONISTIC EXCHANGE

Of all of the challenges the two empires faced, the constant existence of another universal king was one of the most vexing. Another structured system of aristocratic legitimacy could seriously threaten or destabilize the kosmokrator's own courtly hierarchy. The sovereigns therefore expended a great deal of energy and creativity on establishing or maintaining the coherency of their ritual and visual tools of dominance in the face of symbolic capital generated and controlled by their competitor. Thus the sovereigns aimed their ritual and visual assertions not only at each other, but back to their own courts. The other king could be cast as usurper and enemy or partner and equal, coexisted with contradictory messages presented simultaneously to internal and external audiences.

The Romans and Sasanian kings interacted with each other, exchanged ideas and images in a competitive and violently hostile atmosphere, even in circumstances where they substantially adopted and integrated their opponent's cultural material. For this reason the processes of Roman-Sasanian cross-cultural interaction are best described as *agonistic exchange*. The Roman and Sasanian relationship evolved over time, beginning and persisting in a spirit of outright hostility for seventy decades before transforming into a more formalized and familiar, though often no less hostile, system in the late third century. Belligerent at its inception in the third century, Roman-Sasanian interaction soon developed a more creative and reciprocal quality, with diplomacy and its artistic and ceremonial expressions often supplementing or sublimating military action. Once the two cultures became familiar with each other, Roman-Sasanian relations, be they benign or hostile, became a collaborative, or better, *conversational* process of give and take, consisting of statements and counterstatements. Like a conversation, the process often could unfold one-sidedly, with one realm selectively and unevenly producing or consuming cultural material and polemical statements.

The use of the term "exchange" is not meant to imply that the "goods" exchanged were inert substances, valuable or useful, yet ultimately interchangeable with any other precious or useful commodity. While this sort of trade took place and was very important to both empires' economies, it does not fully account for the agency inherent in the exchanged statements,

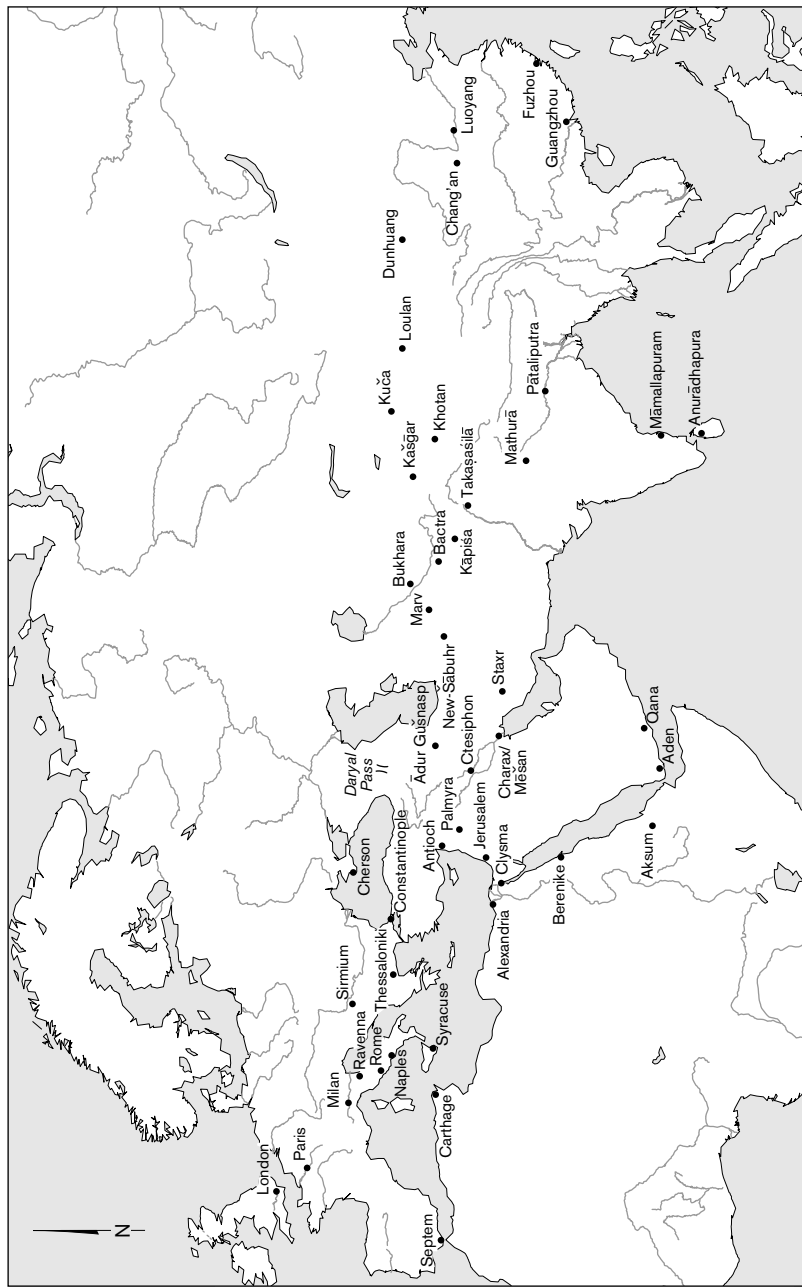
images, and ideas themselves. At the highest level of exchange, the cultural material that moved between the courts was itself potentially significant and carried a message or meaning that persistently challenged the courts, tempting them to integrate it or demanding that they defuse and counter it. Like most other Roman and Sasanian court productions, material and practices deployed in their interactions functioned within the web of signification established by the court cultures and departed from their conventions. Finally, it is important to point out that at the highest levels, a host culture did not passively receive the goods offered. The material, activities, or ideas that moved between courts were powerful statements, but the act of taking was just as potent as that of giving.

The two courts' fraught relationship unfolded through a complex process of give and take, the hallmark of which was a never-ending struggle to manipulate and shape the other's identity while taking, diffusing, and re-deploying the other's polemical material.⁸⁴ The two sovereigns sought to shape their own identity and that of their opponent in order to gain an advantage, such as instigating a war obtaining cooperation or clemency, or mobilizing elements of their own or their competitor's society.⁸⁵ These rhetorical approaches were very much involved with other more direct instruments for the empires' defense or aggrandizement, such as the application of physical force or payment of subsidies, and often times enveloped and articulated these more naked expressions of power.

Both processes depended on many of the basic ritual-visual practices that the courts used to construct their identities and project power over their own empires; in a sense they were outgrowths of their indigenous techniques that eventually harmonized over the centuries. Fundamentally, the art and ritual of kingship provided a sacral, yet extrareligious language of legitimacy and debate for communication, which facilitated, at certain points, such as diplomatic interchange, the meeting and melding of the two cultures' practices of kingship. This fusion in turn transformed both cultures: although the relationship of the two realms ranged from relatively amicable, such as between Arcadius and Yazdegerd I, to deadly adversarial, as between Kōsrow II and Heraclius, in their later history they were arguably more familiar with each other than with any other power.

A GLOBAL STAGE

A number of processes facilitated or compelled cross-cultural interaction, including forced migrations as a result of war, skilled workers or intellec-



Map 5. The global context of Roman and Sasanian interaction.

tuals seeking opportunity, mercantile activity, and direct diplomatic contact. While much of the ideological maneuvering took place at the courtly apex, many interregional—even global—channels and processes outside the emperors' control also facilitated cultural contact and interchange (map 5). This larger world of human and mercantile commerce brought the powers into contact, allowing for the movement of ideas between realms and sometimes providing a venue for competition or (more rarely) cooperation. When considering these wider processes it is important to keep in mind that the courts expended a considerable amount of energy attempting to conform them to their worldview. From the perspective of two universal empires, the economic, demographic, and political forces that facilitated Roman-Sasanian interaction also provided the stage and actors for their dramatic expressions of power. Thus, the courts often portrayed routine embassies as unequivocal expressions of submission, and trade could be tribute and payments of indemnities gifts.

Trade

Several systems of intercontinental trade through Central Asia, the Mesopotamian marchlands, and the Indian Ocean bound the two realms together and facilitated communication with the larger late antique world. These channels of cross-continental movement facilitated the fluid passage of technology, ideas, visual motifs, and practices and were indirect modes of communication and competition between the Romans and Sasanians. Over the period in which the majority of Roman-Sasanian interactions occurred these trade routes were divided into three branches. The most traveled land route ran from Han, Sui, or Tang territory across the northern rim of the Tarim Basin in the direction of the Ferghana Valley, then westward to the Sogdian cities of Transoxiana, Afrāsiāb, and Panjikent and the oasis outpost of Bukhara.⁸⁶ This route then proceeded into Sasanian territory through the frontier city of Marv into Iran, and, by way of several designated exchange points, into the Roman empire. Through a series of peace treaties in the late third and fourth centuries, the two courts established a system of trade regulations that mandated that goods be exchanged only under the control of the two states, at designated trading stations.⁸⁷ This policy soon came to be the norm and was accepted in later fifth- and sixth-century treaties. According to an imperial edict dating to 408–409 the designated exchange points were Nisibis and Kallinikos in Mesopotamia, and Artašat in Armenia.⁸⁸ After the Sasanians created a Marzbanate out of eastern Armenia in the fifth century, its capital Duin then took on this role.⁸⁹ Apart from this central route, a northern route, which the Romans exploited particularly in

the sixth and seventh centuries, led from the Tarim Basin to Lake Issyk-kül largely bypassing Sasanian control before descending to the shores of the Caspian Sea and entering the Roman sphere of influence through the Caucasus and the Black Sea, where it joined with the northern "fur route" that communicated with northern Europe.⁹⁰ A southern route ran from the Lop Nor to Khotan into Bactria before descending through the Hindukush to the Gandhara region and the Indian Ocean. There it joined trade routes that crisscrossed the Indian Ocean from China to the Persian Gulf and Iran or connected the Arabian peninsula with Ethiopia and Roman Alexandria.⁹¹ In the early third century, trade still flourished in semiautonomous mercantile cities such as Hatra and Palmyra that served as middlemen between the two realms.⁹² However, as the Roman and Sasanian emperors destroyed or incorporated these cities, with Hatra demolished by Šāpūr I in 240 and Palmyra by Aurelian in 272/3, subsequent treaties and regulations confined trade between the two empires to such depots as Nisibis and later Dara.⁹³

While the cities of Nisibis and Dara formed the point of direct, official mercantile contact, many offshoots of the silk and spice routes connected the two realms to each other as well as to the late antique world at large. In an attempt to bypass the Sasanian monopoly of the silk trade, in the sixth century Rome exploited both the northern land routes and the southern sea routes by making treaties with the Türk empire and the Ethiopians, respectively.⁹⁴ These trade routes continued to develop even as the Roman economy declined and collapsed in the sixth and seventh centuries, possibly because they fed the court's still unabating hunger for luxury goods.⁹⁵ To judge from archaeological and numismatic evidence, during the first centuries of Roman-Sasanian interaction, the sea route to India and China still carried much of the trade between Rome and China; however, beginning with Ardāšīr I's conquests on both sides of the Persian Gulf and peaking with Kōsrow I's control of all coastal areas from the Red Sea to the Indus, the Sasanians soon dominated the Indian Ocean sea trade.⁹⁶ Under Kōsrow I, the Sasanians began to expand into Sri Lanka and even markets in Southeast Asia, a process that greatly facilitated Muslim expansion into this area a century or two later.⁹⁷

Intermediaries

Extending the length and breadth of the globe, from the Indian Ocean to the steppes of Central Asia, the variety of regions and peoples that played a role in the two realms' struggles demonstrates how the field of competition, as well as the empires' knowledge of the world, expanded exponentially during this period. Several peoples who lived in the border areas or

strategic military or commercial locations, or who had established themselves as participants in international trade, were instrumental in mediating both economic and cultural goods between the two realms. Armenian and Syriac speakers lived on both sides of the frontier and, when left unmolested by the two great powers, lived as though nothing divided them.⁹⁸ Until they were destroyed by or incorporated into the Roman or Sasanian empire, the independent merchant cities of Palmyra and Hatra functioned as engines of exchange as well as sites of conflict between the empires in the third century.⁹⁹ Cults of Christian martyrs originating in Syria and Mesopotamia gained adherents in both empires whose backgrounds extended well beyond the original Syriac-speaking population, even into the courts.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the Syrian martyr Sergius could count no less than the Roman emperor Justinian I and the Sasanian king of kings Kōsrow II as donors, with several records of Kōsrow II's rich offerings and the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople standing as testaments to the frontier saint's cross-cultural appeal.¹⁰¹ Jewish communities lived under both Roman and Sasanian rule; while their rabbinic and social traditions diverged, they were rarely without influence from the other.¹⁰²

Armenia played an especially important and constant role in facilitating exchange between the two realms, and its elites were politically and culturally adept at operating in both the Roman and the Iranian cultural spheres.¹⁰³ While not partitioned as starkly as Armenia, the kingdom of Lazika too passed between Roman and Sasanian spheres of influence. Because its kings were integrated into both court hierarchies, at times even concurrently, the Laz transmitted several royal practices and attributes between the two realms through the travels of their kings.¹⁰⁴ One Laz king, Gubaz II (Gr. *Gōbazēs*), was half-Roman and had served as *silentarios* at the Roman court in Constantinople.¹⁰⁵ From what is known about the Sasanian court, it is clear that the sons of vassal kings resided at court, participated in royal activities with the king, and were integrated into the court's ritual life as well.¹⁰⁶

Farther south the Arab Lakhmids and Ghassanids were responsible for starting, as well as fighting in, many Roman-Sasanian conflicts, especially in the sixth century.¹⁰⁷ Not surprisingly, the Lakhmid and Ghassanid rulers were well integrated into the two court hierarchies and appropriated diverse aspects of their court cultures.¹⁰⁸ Although situated on the empires' peripheries, the kingdom of Aksum in east Africa and the rulers of the Ḥaḍramawt in the southern Arabian peninsula received the attention of both powers from the mid-third through the seventh century.¹⁰⁹ Given these regions' ability to control the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade and, in the case of

Ḥaḍramawt, a possible route of invasion into Iran, the Roman and Sasanian courts expended a great deal of diplomatic and monetary resources in both. While the Sasanians were ultimately more successful, incorporating the rulers of the south Arabian kingdoms of Ḥimyar, Saba, and Ḥaḍramawt into their courtly hierarchy by the reign of Šāpūr II, the Romans continued to use Christian missionary work and enthronement of bishops as an imperial tool in attempting to gain a foothold in the region through the fifth century.¹¹⁰ In the sixth century the Christian Aksumites and Jewish Ḥimyarites fought several proxy wars on behalf of the Romans and Persians for control of the Arabian peninsula.¹¹¹

Settled Central Asian peoples such as the Sogdians, and nomadic powers such as the Avars, Huns, Chionites, Hephthalites, Khazars, and the first Türk steppe empire, became involved in the affairs of both empires.¹¹² As they became embroiled in Roman-Sasanian conflicts these steppe peoples extended the field of contact as well as rivalry between the two realms into Central Asia in mercantile, diplomatic, and military spheres alike. The Sogdians, an eastern Iranian people, were an especially important catalyst in this process. This merchant people established trading colonies emanating from their homeland in Transoxiana throughout the length of the Silk Road, from the Crimea to China, and were responsible for mediating goods, motifs, and religions between Rome and Iran, not to mention Europe and Asia.¹¹³ In addition, Sogdians played an important diplomatic role in the Türk steppe empire in dealings with Sasanian Iran and China and in serving this third power provided yet another indirect avenue of communication between the Roman and Sasanian worlds.¹¹⁴ The collaborative aspect of the Roman-Sasanian relationship was most readily apparent in relation to the invasions of nomadic steppe peoples. Though both attempted to play these tribes off each other, they at times mutually portrayed each other as strongholds of civilization to facilitate cooperation in the face of the pressures of the nomadic peoples, who humiliated and shook both realms several times over.¹¹⁵ For a period of time from the mid-fifth century to the early sixth century, the Romans and Sasanians cooperated in defending the Daryal Pass through the Caucasus, although disagreements over this also lay at the core of the early sixth-century wars.¹¹⁶

War and Deportation

As a result of the nearly constant warfare between the two realms, massive numbers of individuals, both soldiers and civilians, were deported from their homelands and forcibly resettled. This process was another important, though unfortunate, engine of exchange between the two empires.¹¹⁷ In

especially the campaigns of Šāpūr I in the third century until those of Kōsrow II in the seventh century, the Sasanian kings systematically resettled the populations of conquered areas, carefully skimming off aristocrats and skilled craftsmen whose talents and manpower they exploited to build their cities, execute their civil engineering projects, and defend their eastern and Caucasian borders.¹¹⁸ The Persians often kept family and even community structures intact in their deportation of populations, sometimes even “recreating” a ravaged city within a Sasanian province.¹¹⁹ This active policy of deportation enriched the Sasanian empire immensely, both economically and technologically, to the point that some have even argued that the prospect of gaining human capital was the primary motivation for Sasanian military campaigns.¹²⁰ However, this phenomenon of sustained large-scale deportations was a double-edged sword for the Sasanians, since it augmented their vibrant native Christian populations, as well as enriched the empire with skilled craftsmen.¹²¹ A Syriac hagiographic text, the Acts of Pusai, reflects both effects:

The heroic Pusai, then, was descended from prisoners [of war], whom Shapur, son of Hormizd settled in Veh-Shapur, a city in the province of Pars. . . . He had lived in this world peacefully as Christian before his imprisonment. . . . Pusai was an excellent craftsman and was expert in weaving and embroidering gold ornaments. He was also among those craftsmen whom the king gathered from the various ethnic groups, from the deported and from his subjects, and whom he formed into an association with many subdivisions and for whom he fitted out a workshop next to his palace.¹²²

In addition to the craftsmen who produced art objects, the Sasanians captured a large amount of booty during their incursions, facilitating the movement of Roman art objects into their realm, some of which the king took as his own share.¹²³

Population transfers were a function of military success but could take on a symbolic significance as well.¹²⁴ The Romans did not have a developed policy of deportation, as they did not enjoy as regular or as spectacular military successes as the Sasanians.¹²⁵ While the Romans did not gain as much economically or technologically from the Persian captives, when possible Roman emperors resettled Persian captives in Roman territory as farm laborers to repopulate ravaged provinces and, if nothing else, for propagandistic reasons.¹²⁶ According to Herodian, Ardašīr I equipped four hundred men, picked for their impressive physical stature, with splendid clothes and arms and sent them as envoys to Severus Alexander.¹²⁷ Ardašīr I clearly intended the spectacle to overawe the emperor, since, at least according to Hero-

dian, the envoys were instructed to demand “back” Ardašīr’s Achaemenid inheritance from the Romans. Very much attuned to the symbolism, Severus Alexander stripped them of their finery and resettled them in Phrygia to show his disdain for Ardašīr’s request.

After Galerius’s victory over Narseh, Diocletian resettled Persian captives taken in battle in Thrace; Constantius II reportedly resettled Persian captives taken in raids into Sasanian territory in Thrace as well.¹²⁸ The *Notitia Dignitatum* records a division of *equites Persae clibanarii* that was possibly formed by troops who fled to Rome with the Sasanian prince Hormozd.¹²⁹ Justinian, an emperor especially tuned to symbolic gestures, formed a detachment of captured Persian soldiers called the Perso-Justiniani who carried out the very practical task of fighting the Goths in Italy, much like his Justiniani Vandali, who fought in the east.¹³⁰ A funerary inscription of a cavalryman from the Perso-Justiniani, which shows some level of integration with the local population, is extant at Grado.¹³¹ Although the amount of booty, and thus visual material, that the Roman armies captured pales in comparison to that taken by the Sasanians, it was still a considerable point of entry for many foreign ideas.¹³² The presence of the Persian armies in the Roman Near East and Egypt also fostered cultural exchange.¹³³ After Heraclius’s seventh-century invasion, many Christians emigrated from the shattered Sasanian empire and settled inside Roman territory, including Constantinople, bringing new ideas with them.¹³⁴

Voluntary Movement of Persons

Apart from forced movements, individuals and groups voluntarily migrated between the two empires, seeking economic opportunities or intellectual freedom. These voluntary migrations—both temporary and permanent—ranged from groups of skilled craftsmen seeking economic opportunity to talented individuals who hoped to improve their prospects or find refuge from the ill will of the rival sovereign. For example, many skilled Roman silk workers immigrated to the Sasanian empire to find work after Justinian I’s tariffs and price fixing practically killed the industry in the Roman empire, and took with them, no doubt, motifs and imagery as well as technical expertise.¹³⁵ Similarly, after Justinian effectively closed the Athenian Academy in 529, prohibiting the teaching of law and philosophy there and pagans from teaching anywhere, six prominent philosophers led by Damascius traveled to Ctesiphon to seek refuge at the court of Kōsrow I.¹³⁶ This sort of intellectual movement also occurred as a matter of diplomacy. Procopius records that Justinian I lent the sickly Kōsrow I the services of a physician over the course of a year.¹³⁷ Persian Christians traveled to the Roman

empire because it was a center of Christian learning or to escape persecution.¹³⁸ However, the flow of information was not just unidirectional. A learned Syrian cleric, Paul the Persian, traveled to Constantinople from the Sasanian empire and instructed Justin I and various high court officials on doctrinal issues before returning to Nisibis.¹³⁹

Several high-level officials, and even members of the royal family, sought refuge at the court of their sovereign's opponent, a phenomenon that increased the courts' knowledge of their rival and his court culture.¹⁴⁰ In the fourth century the Sasanian prince Hormozd sought refuge at the court of Constantius II and even accompanied him on his famous trip to Rome, serving as a mouthpiece for witty commentary in Ammianus's account.¹⁴¹ Hormozd served as a cavalry commander and took part in Julian's ill-fated campaign against his brother.¹⁴² Conversely, Ammianus devotes a chapter to the defection of Antoninus, bodyguard of the *dux* of Mesopotamia, to Šāpūr II and the service rendered to the king in his campaign against the Romans.¹⁴³ As a consequence of their diplomatic service, envoys became acquainted with the customs of their hosts and could pick up tastes for Roman and Persian luxury goods and visual culture from long stays in the other empire's capital.¹⁴⁴ Military service and the occasional capture of rich booty brought aristocrats into continued contact with the other empire's culture as well.

Diplomacy

Diplomatic communication between the two rulers was the most important avenue of exchange between the two courts and was responsible for fostering an intimate knowledge of each other's court culture.¹⁴⁵ The two courts entered into direct and increasingly more intricate exchanges as diplomatic relations solidified in the late fourth century and early fifth century.¹⁴⁶ Regular exchanges of envoys provided a direct point of contact between the two court cultures and, in a sense, spliced the royal rituals of the Roman and Sasanian courts. Inasmuch as an exchange of gifts was an important and obligatory component of every diplomatic interaction, Roman-Sasanian diplomacy promoted the movement between the two realms of an immense amount of visual material aimed directly at royal evaluation and consumption. This gift exchange was built into diplomatic protocol. In the sixth century, according to Peter the Patrician's account, after the emperor's formalized conversation with the Sasanian envoy, the envoy would say:

Your brother sent you gifts, and I pray you to accept them. The emperor then gives permission for this. The envoy then retires with his men [to the *antikonsistōrion*], picks up the gifts, and returns, himself bearing a robe [*pallin*], precious decorated object [*kosmidin*], or some other such

thing, while each of the others holds an example (of each present given) . . . the Silentiaries receive these presents, and, after the inventory taken by the Magister, they are responsible for bringing these gifts to the sacred wardrobe [*vestosacra*], where they are evaluated and appraised. The Vestiaries [*vestosacrani*] must then communicate the value of the presents to the Magister, who, when the time comes, recalls this for the emperor when it is time for him to send gifts in return through his envoys.¹⁴⁷

Exchange of silk clothes and precious, well-wrought metalwork containing images of hunting or combat became traditional for both sides. This is not to say that all or even a sizable majority of these exchanges were cordial. Rather, they created avenues of constant communication that sublimated or channeled the considerable hostility present on both sides into less destructive displays and assertions of power. Not all communication at the apex took place through diplomatic processes, however. On the battlefield, in the process of campaigning or by proxy, both sides communicated statements of challenge that were anything but diplomatic.¹⁴⁸

SITES OF DEBATE, OBJECTS OF APPROPRIATION

It is useful to look at the problem of the cross-cultural interaction between Rome and Sasanian Iran from one final perspective and consider which types of objects and spaces enticed the kings to appropriate them and which proved to be the most popular venues for the two realms' debate. Overall, those architectural features, urban spaces, or sites of performance that defined royal identity within one of the two empires consistently show evidence of visual or ritual expressions that have to do with the two rulers' and realms' relational identity. Sites where the sovereigns showed themselves to their own people and to envoys, such as hippodromes, banqueting and audience halls, urban spaces that hosted processions, regal iconographies (such as *nimbuses*), ornamental motifs, games (such as the hippodrome, chess, polo, or backgammon), luxury items (like silk shoes and robes), and audience-hall technologies, were the privileged venues for the two courts' debates. The objects and activities that defined each emperor's identity, and ensured his dominance of the social hierarchy, tended to carry polemical messages about the place and identity of the other king. On the other hand, these same visual, urban, and spatial environments were also the prime targets of appropriation by their rival, as the quotation that opens this chapter illustrates. In a similar sense, the emperors' physical bodies could be simultaneously objects of appropriation and places of debate. The imperial body, and thus

identity, were constantly manipulated and adjusted in pictorial spaces, ranging from sculpture to icons to numismatic representations. One can find statements on the two sovereigns' relational identity on their clothing and regalia, and even the ornamental designs that embellished them. This was the case occasionally in real life, too—most glaringly in the case of the captured Roman emperor Valerian, whose identity was manipulated by the ritual humiliation he was forced to endure, but also, vicariously, as we have seen, in the treatment of the other emperor's envoy.

Although the two empires' courts and urban centers, under the auspices of diplomacy, were the commonest locations of symbolic display and identity manipulation, similar events took place far afield and by proxy. The consolidation of symbolic capital took place on an international level, too, and it was a tool that the emperors utilized to gain control over client states, as well as to negotiate their relationship with each other. Within cultural systems as globally minded as the Roman and Sasanian empires these symbolic trappings became very important, because they were unifying elements that facilitated the functioning of socially and culturally diverse societies. Both empires subsumed many sociopolitical systems and thus systems of conferring honors. The Romans and Sasanians, with their compulsory rites of investiture and robing ceremonies, conflated these various systems of symbolic capital into a single system. The two powers codified, delegated, and guaranteed, even bureaucratized, this system of symbolic capital. When a client king traveled to the court of the Roman or Sasanian king, he received insignia of office that marked at once his relationship to the Roman court and his membership in the Roman or Sasanian cultural sphere.

The courts and the regalia of buffer states also served as a venue for competition, as both realms strove to establish cultural and political dominance in providing these sovereigns with the marks of legitimate kingship and extolling them as the "gold standard" of legitimacy. The kingdoms on the border between the Roman and Sasanian empires provide several interesting examples both of the two realms' practices of investiture and of the client king's careful and creative balancing act of displaying the sartorial honors given by the two realms.¹⁴⁹ Images of the two kings were prominent in these regalia, and from the bits of evidence that are available it appears that the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns sought to visually comment on and control the identity of the subject king. For example, when the king of the Laz, Tzath, came to Constantinople,

the emperor [Justin I], received him with joy, baptized him, and made him his son. He married a Roman woman, a certain Valeriana, the granddaughter of Nomos, the patrician and *kouropalatēs*, and he took her

to his own land, after having been invested by Justin as king of the Lazi. He wore a crown and royal white *chlamys*, which carried a gold *tablion* on which, in the center, was depicted an image of the emperor Justin; and his white tunic had a golden collar with an image of the emperor.¹⁵⁰

An ivory diptych leaf at the Bargello Museum in Florence depicting an empress shows a similar type of *chlamys* with the emperor's likeness on the *tablion*.¹⁵¹ In this case the images on the subject king's robes of office control his identity and comment on the source of his power—the emperor himself. Different in execution but similar in substance are the many Sasanian silver vessels that served as diplomatic gifts to foreign and internal potentates and depicted the king of kings sometimes even in the act of investing a client.¹⁵²

Alternatively, such displays could occur even in a space where neither court exerted dominance. The Roman and Sasanian courts sought to exert influence culturally as well as militarily in such distant realms as the Aksumite kingdom of Ethiopia or Nubia, and, even if they were not in direct contact, the expanded knowledge of the world and drive for coherence tempted the courts to incorporate distant states into a coherent hierarchy.¹⁵³ The court of the Türk *khaghan* played host to a heated exchange involving the *khaghan* and the Sasanian and Roman envoys who had both come to court the favor of the powerful steppe empire:

When they [the *khaghan* and Roman envoys] were on the march and encamped in a place called Talas, an envoy from the Persians came to meet Sizabul. He invited the Roman and the Persian ambassadors to dine with him. When they arrived, Sizabul treated the Romans with greater esteem and had them recline on the more honorable couch. Moreover, he made many complaints against the Persians, saying that he had suffered wrongs at their hands and on this account was going to war against them. While Sizabul was vehemently making his accusations, the Persian envoy ignored the custom of silence which prevailed amongst them at their feasts and began rapidly to argue back, bravely refuting Sizabul's charges, and those present were astounded at the measure of his rage, since he abandoned custom and used many intemperate expressions. Under these circumstances they departed, and Sizabul prepared his attack on Persia.¹⁵⁴

In this relatively unique situation, the envoys from the two empires sat before the Türk *khaghan*, a third power not dependent on or subordinate to either.

3 The Lure of the Other and the Limits of the Past

From a scattered and fragmentary body of evidence a picture emerges of how an international language of kingship began to arise from the two realms' originally hostile and competitive appraisals of each other in the third century. The two empires' third-century expressions of kingship and triumph arose from long and complex histories. In the age of Severus Alexander, the Romans looked back on several hundred years of continuous triumphal ritual, art, and architecture. Although a new dynasty, the Sasanians appropriated their first expressions of triumph from a long-established repertoire developed by their erstwhile Arsacid overlords, which itself drew at least indirect inspiration from an equally venerable history of Hellenistic and Achaemenid precedents.¹ Ultimately, despite the continuing influence—and physical presence—of these august lineages, contemporary concerns engendered a new dynamic in Roman and Sasanian triumphal art.

THE BARBARIAN

The figure of the "Eastern barbarian," with his loose trousers, long-sleeved shirt, cape, and "Phrygian" cap, had a well-established history in Roman visual culture by the early third century and was used to represent a variety of peoples, gods, and historical and mythological figures.² Clothed in this garb, the figure of the "Parthian" provided the most ready visual template for the new Persian threat. Roman representations of Parthians derived from a multifaceted background. Roman art inherited a tradition with roots in Athenian and Hellenistic depictions of Achaemenid Persians, which was modified by the Romans' own ethnographic observation.³ As well as be-

coming an important attribute of Roman imperial power the image of the Parthian served as a way for Roman visual culture to imagine extreme otherness and portray a culture whose values (luxury, pleasure) and strengths (servility to authority) were diametrically opposed to Rome's.⁴

The image of a Parthian submitting to Roman dominance had a huge impact on Roman visual culture from Augustus's time.⁵ The image of a Parthian returning the legionary *signa* captured from Crassus in 53 B.C. gained prominence—and even wide popularity—after Augustus's negotiated settlement with Phraates. The event became intertwined with Augustus's formulation of divine kingship and the culmination of Rome's cosmic hegemony in an Augustan golden age.⁶ It appeared on large issues of *denarii* produced by the Senate, and Augustus's official iconography, most prominently exemplified by the Augustus of the Prima Porta, incorporated it as the central element in visual depictions of his "culmination of a perfect world order."⁷ The Roman Senate and Augustus intervened architecturally at several important sites in the city of Rome to commemorate the event, thus making the Parthian imagery part of Rome's privileged cultic and memorial environment.⁸ Augustus planned a temple of Mars Ultor on the Capitoline to house the *signa* and erected a triumphal arch next to the temple of the Divus Julius depicting Parthians retreating in battle and the now-famous image of the kneeling barbarian handing over the *signa*.⁹ These structures and images were a constant visual presence in the city. For Rome's later rulers, they, like the memory of Augustus himself, would be an object of emulation and appropriation.¹⁰

Images of Parthians in Roman ritual performance and visual arts maintained a place that representations of other peoples did not. Whereas numismatic and monumental imagery displayed Northern barbarians as defeated warriors, slaves, or even captives receiving *clementia* before a Roman tribunal, the image of the Parthian offering *adoratio* had a separate significance. Although Parthians also appeared as defeated warriors or captives, a Parthian performing *adoratio* held a special place insofar as it represented a renewed acknowledgment of Rome's cosmic dominance over "the rest of the (semi-)civilized world."¹¹

Subsequent Roman emperors went to lengths to accentuate this claim in visual and ritual propaganda. Nero, in celebration of yet another less than heroic negotiated settlement, erected monuments on the Capitoline, including an arch and a *tropaea*.¹² Both Suetonius and Cassius Dio record that Nero's reception and crowning of the Arsacid king of Armenia, Trdat I, was carefully stage-managed.¹³ Dio provides an especially vivid account of the investiture:

At daybreak Nero, wearing the triumphal garb and accompanied by the senate and the Praetorians, entered the Forum. He ascended the rostra and seated himself upon a chair of state. Next Tiridates and his suite passed between lines of heavy-armed troops drawn up on either side, took their stand close to the rostra, and did obeisance [*proskynēsan auton*] to the emperor as they had done before. At this a great roar went up, which so alarmed Tiridates that for some moments he stood speechless, in terror of his life. Then, silence having been proclaimed, he recovered courage and quelling his pride made himself subservient to the occasion and to his need, caring little how humbly he spoke, in view of the prize he hoped to obtain. These were his words: "Master, I am the descendant of Arsaces, brother of the kings Vologaesius and Pacorus, and thy slave. And I have come to thee, my god, to worship thee as I do Mithras. The destiny thou spinnest for me shall be mine; for thou art my Fortune and my Fate." Nero replied to him as follows: "Well hast thou done to come hither in person, that meeting me face to face thou mightest enjoy my grace. For what neither thy father left thee nor thy brothers gave and preserved for thee, this do I grant thee. King of Armenia I now declare thee, that both thou and they may understand I have power to take away kingdoms and to bestow them." At the close of these words he bade him ascend by the approach which had been built in front of the rostra expressly for this occasion, and when Tiridates had been made to sit beneath his feet, he placed the diadem upon his head.¹⁴

In the focusing lens of the ritual, Trdat not only played the quintessential role of the submitting foreign king, but for a brief moment allowed the Romans to see the "world as it ought to be" according to imperial ideology.¹⁵ Similarly, following his initially successful campaigns against the Parthians (113–117), Trajan installed Parthmaspates as his puppet king and propagated images of this event.¹⁶ Although Parthmaspates turned out to be short-lived, several coin types bombastically advertised this act of king-making.¹⁷ On a brass sestertius, in a scene reminiscent of Nero's installation of Tiridates, Trajan is enthroned on a sella castrensis placed on an elevated tribunal with his right arm extended to grant the diadem. Parthmaspates renders adoratio/proskynēsis with his hands outstretched, signifying his and thus Parthia's submission, while the legend proclaims: REX PARTHIS DATUS ("a king bestowed on the Parthians").¹⁸

Dedicated in 203, the arch of Septimius Severus was the most recent and prominent manifestation of Roman triumphal imagery in the city of Rome prior to the advent of the Sasanians. The arch continued and reinforced the fully formed tradition of representing Parthians as prisoners and subject

peoples in Roman triumphal art, despite, one should add, the lack of a real political or military basis for such a representation. Meant to promote the Severan dynasty as much as proclaim a victory, the arch was the first large-scale imperial monument built in the Forum after an eighty-year hiatus and established a conscious linkage to Augustus's triple-bayed Parthian arch visible only yards away.¹⁹ Reliefs of Roman soldiers leading captive bearded Parthians appear on three sides of the pedestals supporting the disengaged columns.²⁰ The attic panels portray scenes from Augustus's two campaigns, including, on the southwest panel, a relatively nuanced rendering of Ctesiphon, complete with a *čāhār ṭāq* crowning the skyline, while the frieze below depicts a symbolic *pompa triumphalis*, with a familiar scene on the southwest of the arch of Parthians performing *adoratio/proskynēsis*, this time to the goddess Roma.²¹

The image of the Parthian was exceptionally ambivalent. It represented a bitter enemy and a representative of a strange almost antithetical culture, yet, in animating Roman sexual, mythological, and religious imagination, the Parthian could be a figure of extraordinary beauty, wealth, and often magical power and wisdom.²² Extending beyond simply imperial triumphal imagery, representations of the Parthian, with his loose trousers, long-sleeved shirt, cape, and "Phrygian" cap had an exceptional adaptability and longevity in many aspects of Roman visual culture. The Parthian costume clothed many "Oriental" mythological, religious, and historical figures, including Attis, Ganymede, Mithras, Priam, and Orpheus; cosmic personifications, such as in the Grand Camée de Paris; and even other barbarians, such as the Dacian.²³ Some of these were not without a dual political-mythological connotation, such the image of Priam paying homage to Achilles.²⁴

By the time of the advent of the Sasanians, the image of the "Parthian" or "Eastern barbarian" was already tightly interwoven in Roman visual culture and imagination and had, in effect, become one of the expected visual attributes of a victorious Roman emperor.²⁵ The image formed a ready, though eventually problematic, template for Rome's first appraisals and understandings of the Sasanians. The image of the Eastern other, both as a subject king and as a figure of exotic wonder, did not disappear from Roman visual culture after the Sasanians consolidated their hold on the former Parthian empire; however, it quickly became unstable in the face of the power, aspirations, and danger that the new dynasty presented. As the Romans learned more about the Sasanian dynasty and the true threat it presented to their existence the "Persian" no longer was the same object of sex-

ual or mystical imaginings. The idea of the “Persian,” like that of the “Parthian,” as wealthy and dangerous, and whose acknowledgment and submission were supremely desirable, remained current in imperial imagery. With one important exception, the benevolent, cosmic, mysterious, beautiful, and wealthy Eastern others largely disappeared from official imperial productions, leaving only images of subject kings and prisoners still steadfastly represented in the costume. Figures in “Eastern” costume still inhabited nonimperial sectors of Roman visual culture, and in the fourth century the developing Christian religion appropriated the image to represent several biblical figures, such as Daniel or the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace.²⁶ Christian visual culture even appropriated specifically imperial formulations, most notably the image of Eastern kings bearing gifts and rendering *proskynēsis* before an emperor, which was used to represent the Adoration of the Magi.²⁷

Unlike the Romans, the Sasanians did not inherit an indigenous convention to represent a Roman or a victory specifically over the Romans. As far as their absence will allow us to conclude, representations of Romans were not a prominent part of Arsacid triumphal imagery. The Sasanians, however, did not lack either precedents or creativity in imaging kingship or victory.²⁸ Relatively recent Parthian and Greco-Roman expressions and temporally distant, yet geographically pervasive and accessible Achaemenid images offered the new dynasty many visually stunning and ideologically useful prototypes. Prevalent throughout the Near Eastern visual environment in which Sasanian visual culture developed, media as diverse as cylinder seals and rock reliefs provided a rich array of many extremely ancient conventions for representing triumph. Some of these, such as the millennia-old act of trampling a defeated enemy, the Sasanians appropriated for their earliest statements. Ardašīr I’s relief at Naqš-e Rostam presented a new Sasanian interpretation of this idea and became a template for several of his son’s reliefs. Alternatively, Ardašīr I’s relief at Fīrūzābād, representing his overthrow of Ardawān, a model that several later Sasanian reliefs adopted as well, portrays an equestrian victory, departing from the tradition of Parthian battle scenes as exemplified by the worn relief of Gotarzes Geopothros (Gōdarz ī Gēv) crowned by a Victory, also at Bisotūn.²⁹

Although Ardašīr I and Šāpūr I incorporated these ancient traditions into their triumphal statements, the new Sasanian iconographies of triumph represented a vibrant and adaptable creation that responded to the experience and assertions of Sasanian court culture rather than to the dictates of a calcified “Oriental tradition.” In contrast to Roman visual culture, when im-

ages of Romans begin appearing in Sasanian visual culture, with Šāpūr I's unprecedented tide of victory, the Sasanians approached the Romans with fresh, contemporary eyes. With respect to appearance, symbols of power, and even personal physiognomy, the Sasanians represented the Romans as they saw them, and were not bounded by any generic conventions, as were the Romans initially.

CREATING, RESHAPING, AND NEGOTIATING MEMORY

The preservation and manipulation of cultural memory were a constant and much-contested preoccupation for the two self-described ancient and universal empires. Despite both regimes' claims to be ageless and changeless, a relentless series of transformations marked every era of their existence. Internal transfers of subject or captive peoples augmented the population pressures caused by massive influxes of nomadic peoples who swept over the Danube or Caspian Gates. To make sense of the tension between the two regimes' steadfast adherence to myths of monolithic stability and the volatility of the Mediterranean and Near East during this period, it is fruitful to concentrate on the means by which the two empires negotiated these changes. An important segment of Roman and Sasanian imperial ritual and artistic activity sought to apprehend and shape the past as a method of forming the regimes' identities. That a regime would associate itself with a prestigious past appears rather obvious. However, because this practice is widespread throughout history, its particular consequences for the Roman and Sasanian empires' relations with one another are easy to misunderstand.

The Roman and Sasanian empires did maintain a remarkable degree of cultural continuity throughout the four hundred years under study, and if one concentrates only on the imperial elites, this continuity appears even more pronounced. However, by 630, on the eve of the Muslim invasions, many changes had swept both empires. At this point in time, the two states bore a greater resemblance to each other than to the empires of Severus Alexander and Ardašīr I, which preceded them, and even less similarity to the Rome of Augustus or the Persian empire of Darius I. It is tempting to concentrate solely on the changes and continuities themselves in explaining the two empires' cultural identity; yet focusing on just the continuities or discontinuities does not take us very far in understanding Roman or Sasanian cultural stability or identity construction. A more fruitful approach is to consider the motivations and methods of such assiduous preservation or creative reenlivenment.

The Roman and Sasanian emperors sought to engage with, and define themselves in relation to, various pasts at different points in their histories. In addition to the eminent kings of their own dynasty, the Sasanians included as their ancestors the historical, yet imperfectly understood Achaemenids, legendary kings and heroes such as Jamšēd and Frēdōn, and mythical dynasties such as the Kayānids.³⁰ The Romans had a much different sense of the past, which was articulated by a sustained historical literary tradition. Christianity introduced a new concept of history, grafting the religion's Old Testament scriptural tradition and the history of the church itself onto the Roman past.³¹ A sovereign could select among a variety of pasts according to how he wished to define his identity. This was partially dictated by the potential audience an emperor wanted to impress or convince. Different audiences required different identities thus presenting a different past over which an emperor needed to gain control. In the face of all these changes, how did the two realms engage their pasts, and what purpose did their engagement with the past serve?

First, the past was a source of power. The Roman's and Sasanian's techniques of creating and shaping memory were a means of ensuring that they gained or retained ownership not only of their own venerable pasts but also of prestigious mythological or foreign pasts out of which (external or internal) elites might fashion rival claims to territory, privileges, or the throne, or that the oppressed masses could potentially use to combat their subjection and agitate for, in today's parlance, human rights.³² However, the two realms' engagement with the past was not just focused on establishing dominance or prestige. In these two very conservative cultures, control of the past was also a useful way to present and enact new visions of culture. Both late Roman and Sasanian society valued stable order, yet at the same time they were more than able to adapt to change and to innovate new solutions to new situations. The language of conservatism was used time and time again to cloak vast changes. The Roman and Sasanian sovereigns presented change almost always as a return to the ways of ancestors or a renewal of the traditions of the empire. When a Roman emperor conducted a reform of some aspect of society or introduced some sort of legal or administrative innovation, he often represented those changes as a restoration (*restoratio*) of past order.³³ The revolutionary changes that the *Letter of Tansar* reports Ardašīr I introduced (which were likely a literary fiction to bolster the equally drastic changes wrought by Kōsrow I) were supposedly pious efforts to return to the traditions of the Sasanians' Kayānid ancestors—in this case, the half-remembered Achaemenians.³⁴

RITUAL AND VISUAL TECHNIQUES USED TO SHAPE THE PAST

Although the Roman and Sasanian emperors used terms such as “restoration” in their approach to the past, a better description of the process is appropriation and innovation, even in situations where there was a strong and continuous sense of the past. Discourse, either textual or verbal, was certainly a keystone in late antique attempts to shape and make sense of the past, yet the sovereigns translated these discursive claims into more tangible expressions for themselves, their court, and the people.³⁵ While oral histories and historical texts kept the memory of the past alive, the Sasanian and Roman sovereigns, actually experienced the past—and their place and identity in the present in relation to it—spatially and practically. In other words, certain spaces, structures, and practices functioned as sites of memory for the two realms; that is, they facilitated a vital and compelling experience of the past.³⁶ In interacting with them, the sovereigns could manipulate how their societies experienced the past in the present as well as how future generations might remember the past.

Although, from a distance, the Romans and Sasanians used broadly similar ritual-visual techniques to create or appropriate sites of memory, the two realms’ conceptions of the past diverged. The Romans had a strong linear sense of history, supported both by pagan Roman historians with their concept of eternal Rome and by Christian authors with their focus on history’s eventual goal of Christ’s Second Coming.³⁷ The Zoroastrian religion had a finite sense of time, too, with a final battle between good and evil and the renovation of the world. However, as far as we know, the Sasanians did not share the same critical, textually based historiographical tradition that the Romans inherited from the ancient Greek and Hellenistic historians; rather, they approached the world more from the mindset of oral culture and epic in the case of the Middle Persian precursor of the *Šāhnāma*, the *Xwadāy-nāmag*, or from the tradition of Near Eastern royal lists of deeds in the case of the early Sasanian royal inscriptions.³⁸

The Sasanians understood themselves to descend from a venerable line of ancestors, some of whom might be classified as historical whereas others existed in the realm of mythology.³⁹ The early Sasanians understood the Achaemenids to be the last of the mythical Kayānid dynasty and cultivated their relationship with them as it connected them to the ancient Avestan past and was a useful polemic in chipping away the legitimacy of the Arsacids. In the late fifth century the Avestan conception of the past gained as-

cendancy: in order to win legitimacy among eastern Iranian peoples as their empire expanded into Central and South Asia, the Sasanian kings became more interested in foregrounding Avestan aspects of their “history” and elaborated connections between themselves and the larger mythical history of the eastern Iranian tradition.⁴⁰ At this time the Sasanians began to adopt the names and titles of the mythical Kayānid dynasty, such as Kōsrow (Mid. Pers. *Husraw*, after Av. *Kauui Haosrauuah*), supplementing names of Old Persian derivation, such as Ardašīr (after Old Pers. *Artaxšaça*, “Artaxerxes”).⁴¹ However, in the later centuries of the empire, the figure of Ardašīr I again resurfaced as an ideal king, and many deeds and witticisms attributed to him show up in several “mirrors for princes.”⁴²

The question of whether the Sasanians understood themselves to be the successors of the Achaemenids has been the subject of much debate over the last two decades, and the divergent conclusions from that debate have been brought to recent work on both the Sasanian monarchy and their relationship with Rome. As a result, equally divergent arguments have been advanced about the extent of the Sasanians’ and Romans’ understanding of their position in history and about the effects of the past on contemporary relations.⁴³ However, for the purposes of this study, it is just as important to consider the question of the Sasanians’s relationship with Achaemenid sites and visual culture.⁴⁴ Although most scholars now agree that the Sasanians did not accurately understand who the Achaemenids were, it is clear that they had some knowledge—even if just the names—of their royal Persian forebears through legends and stories, lore that was sure to grow from their contacts with the Romans.⁴⁵ More important, the early Sasanians were undeniably drawn to Achaemenid remains and visual culture, a fact that has more bearing on the Sasanians’ actual experience of the past than does the historical accuracy or coherency of who they understood their creators to be.

After Ardašīr’s consolidation of power, Sasanian interest in practices and sites of commemoration grew with their resources to execute them, and endured to the end of the dynasty. An engagement with specific sites contributed to the coherence of the Sasanians’ eclectic understanding of their heritage. Sasanian ritual-visual engagement with the past centered on two types of sites: monumental environments with a connection to the Achaemenids and environments that the Sasanians created themselves *ex novo*. The Sasanian dynasty had its roots in the province of Pārs (Old Pers. *Pārsa*) in southwestern Iran, and, as their homeland and original power base, it was the location of many of the Sasanians’ early monumental rock reliefs and city foundations. To this day the modern province of Fārs has the richest concentration of early Sasanian monuments, and for this reason it pro-

vides several compelling examples of Sasanian ritual and visual memorial activity.

Because the region had been the political and ideological center of the Achaemenian empire, many artistic and architectural vestiges of a great, half-understood Persian heritage confronted the Sasanians and stimulated their own memorial and monumental practices. Although the Achaemenian empire had been defunct for almost five hundred years, its palaces, temples, and tombs still loomed large on Pārs's physical and ideological horizons. At sites such as Persepolis, Naqš-e Rostam, and Eṣṭaḡr (Mid. Pers. *Staxr*) the Sasanian kings interacted with the physical remains of the Achaemenids, negotiating a relationship with the past by creatively integrating them into their religious and courtly experience.

The Sasanian kings also created environments of memory *de novo*, which were focused on natural features sacred to Iranian religion, such as mountains or springs or newly founded cities. Beginning with Ardašīr, city foundations named after their deeds or exploits became the paramount practice of memorialization for the strongest sovereigns. These cities contained elements like palaces and rock reliefs in the surrounding natural environment that turned the entire area into a "memorial zone." Šāpūr I founded the city of Bīšāpūr (Mid. Pers. *Bay-Šābuhr*, "Lord Šāpūr") using captives from Antioch in memory of his western triumphs.⁴⁶ In the river valley to the east of the city he carved three separate rock reliefs celebrating his victories over the Romans and numerous other peoples, thereby creating a site of memory that drew the further rupestrian interventions of three of his successors. In a cave high up above the river Šāpūr I carved from the living rock an eight-meter-tall statue in the round near the cave's entrance, and the cave walls show preparations for the addition of bas-relief carvings. This site is a likely location for Šāpūr's final resting place but at the very least provides a truly monumental focus for cult surrounding his memory.

The later Sasanians also participated in this practice, sometimes even renaming entire provinces, as well as cities, after themselves. Šāpūr II (309–389) created a province called Ērān-xwarrah-šābūhr ("Šāpūr, the Glory of Ērān") in the vicinity of Susa, while Yazdegerd II (438–457) created a province called Ērān-xwarrah-yazdgerd, located roughly in the present-day province of Gorgān; likewise, in the early sixth century Qobād I founded an administrative district Wēh-Kawād along the Babylonian branch of the Euphrates.⁴⁷ Kōsrow I founded a city in the vicinity of Ctesiphon with the captives from his sack of Antioch and named it Weh-andīōg-husraw ("Better Antioch of Kōsrow").⁴⁸

As the dynasty became better established and the Sasanians came to ac-

centuate Avestan rather than Persian history, the old Achaemenid sites became more important for their connection to the Sasanian past. The later Sasanians were drawn to Naqš-e Rostam, an Achaemenid necropolis where the first two king's of kings carved reliefs and founded fires, much as they were to purely Sasanian-created monumental zones such as Bīšāpūr or Ṭāq-e Bostān: to negotiate their relationship with the now ancient and august Sasanian dynasty.⁴⁹ The last Sasanian king, Yazdegerd III, was crowned in Artaxerxes II's temple of Anāhīd in Eṣṭakr.⁵⁰ Although surrounded by Achaemenid animal capitals and bas-relief carvings, this site was chosen because of its connection with Ardašīr I and the genesis of the Sasanian dynasty rather than because of any residual memory of more ancient predecessors.

About the same time that Ardašīr I began consolidating his hold on the political and symbolic forms of power of the vanquished Parthian empire, his Roman counterpart, Severus Alexander (222–235), embarked on a broadly similar program in Rome. Yet, whereas Ardašīr operated from a position of ever-increasing military and ideological strength, Severus Alexander's reign came at a time of growing weakness for the position of the Roman emperor. The reign of *restitutor urbis*, Severus Alexander, was the last time for more than six decades that Rome would experience large-scale imperial building; excepting only the short, concentrated burst at end of Aurelian's reign, emperors would not intervene in Rome's built environment on the same scale until the Tetrarchy.⁵¹ While interest in drawing connections with the revered past certainly did not develop for the first time under Severus Alexander, it did take on a new and concentrated urgency in his reign. Severus Alexander's approach to the city and its ritual and topographic traditions established both a recent precedent and a mode of propagandistic and urban discourse that set the terms for the second half of the third century and beyond.⁵² In an already crowded monumental environment Severus Alexander skillfully devised ways of inserting himself into the sacred topography by concentrating on the foundational myths of the city and some of its most potent figures.⁵³

Severus Alexander's death in 235 at the hands of his soldiers heralded more than three decades of imperial turnover and turmoil that would abate only temporarily with Aurelian (270–276) and come to an end of sorts with Diocletian (285–305). During this period, evidence of imperial approaches to the past and interventions in the city of Rome directed to this end severely taper off, and when they emerge again, in the last quarter of the third century, they are substantially changed. The only solid evidence from this period is usually numismatic, since the mid-third-century emperors' short-

lived and troubled reigns left little archaeological or reliable textual evidence. Nevertheless, at least a few broad themes emerge from this material.

After Severus Alexander, emperors began to agglomerate to themselves specific aspects of imperial and Roman tradition that had previously been purely Roman (in an urban sense), individual, or dynastic.⁵⁴ Having no dynastic connections, some invented them, while others, in this generalizing trend, began to fashion ways in which all (good) imperial predecessors could be “ancestors.” This need, and perhaps ability, to generalize appear almost as recognition of the growing alienation of contemporary experience from the past. Several decades of nonstop imperial usurpation began to break down Rome’s direct experience and transmission of imperial tradition. Almost all records of the cult of the living emperor and the *divi* faltered and disappeared—both in the capital and in the provinces—and many of the city’s ritual traditions involving the emperor, including residence in Rome, fell into abeyance.⁵⁵ There was one constant: although the Roman emperor resided in Rome less often, the city still held interest and power as a site of memory. Emperors still engaged with the city’s ritual traditions and topography while it lay in their control, and the city’s built and ritual environment played an important role in legitimizing their ideological experiments and transformations.

“Rome was where the emperor was” in Tetrarchic understanding, and under Diocletian the city of Rome declined in importance as the Tetrarchic emperor’s regional capitals multiplied.⁵⁶ Besides lying inconveniently far from the *limes*, the city was too potent a space for any one of a college of supposedly equal emperors to hold on his own. Compared with the emperors’ provincial palaces and villas, on which resources were lavished, Rome was largely ignored. Only a very few scattered interventions show a traditional approach to capturing the city’s familiar symbolic spaces.⁵⁷ The relative neglect of Rome and its huge symbolic power became manifest after the dissolution of the Second Tetrarchy, when the eternal city briefly took center stage again. As a symbolically charged space and environment of memory it was a major battleground in the military and ideological battles Maxentius and Constantine fought with the remnants of the Tetrarchic system and, eventually, each other. Both of these emperors’ sons at first attempted to gain recognition from the remnants of the Tetrarchy, but as their efforts soon proved to be a failure they quickly and creatively forged new expressions of kingship that ultimately countered and superseded the Tetrarchic system.

Maxentius and Constantine turned to similar raw materials in crafting their new systems, the foremost being the Roman past and charismatic king-

ship, though each stressed different elements. Maxentius, having been passed over in the Tetrarchic succession, seized Rome and set about creating an effective ideological and visual-ritual system based on a reinvigorated sense of Roman urban preeminence to counter the Tetrarchy.⁵⁸ He began a lavish building program in the city aimed at capturing some of the city's most hallowed sites near the Roman Forum and creating new symbolic centers within the city center and on its periphery.⁵⁹ Despite his later vilification as a failure and a tyrant, Maxentius's program was quite successful.⁶⁰ His defeat was only a military defeat, for after Constantine's military victory over him and subsequent consolidation of power, Constantine essentially appropriated Maxentius's reconfiguration of the *urbs aeterna* and used it as a base for forwarding his new ideas of first solar, then Christian charismatic kingship.⁶¹

Constantinople soon took over Rome's place as the empire's preeminent site of memory, and New Rome's many forums, arches, triumphal columns, and churches bear witness to many urban interventions intent on capturing its memorial significance.⁶² Yet Old Rome still bears the mark of later emperors, from Constantius II in the fourth century to Phocas in the seventh, who intervened in the Roman Forum and Circus Maximus and on Rome's triumphal procession ways to negotiate their own relationship with the Roman past through Rome's urban space.⁶³

THE PAST IN EARLY ROMAN AND SASANIAN POLEMICAL DISCOURSE

Considering the importance that fostering and shaping their cultures' experience of memory held for the Romans and pre-imperial Sasanians, it should come as no surprise that the past should be one of the first arenas in which they sought to come to terms with their new relationship. Although it took about a generation to enter into their visual cultures, the debate between the two empires took on an urgency in their diplomatic exchanges and internal discourse almost immediately.

The extant textual evidence largely stems, on the one hand, from Roman historians who were contemporary with the events and, on the other, from medieval Arabic and Persian texts that were written well after the fall of the Sasanian dynasty but derive from Sasanian historical traditions, if not directly from their court records. Herodian and Ṭabarī provide ready examples of both traditions:

The mainland facing Europe, separated from it by the Aegean Sea and the Propontic gulf, and the region called Asia [Ardašīr I] wished

to recover for the Persian empire. Believing these regions to be his by inheritance he declared that all the countries in that area including Ionia and Caria, had been ruled by Persian governors, from the rule of Cyrus, who first made the Median empire Persian, and ending with Darius, the last of the Persian monarchs whose kingdom Alexander the Macedonian had destroyed. He asserted that it was proper for him to recover for the Persians the kingdom which they formerly possessed.⁶⁴

[Ardašīr I] [arose] in Fārs seeking, as he alleged, to avenge the blood of his paternal cousin Dārā [i.e., Darius III], son of Bahman, son of Isfandiyār, on whom Alexander had made war and had killed two of the latter's chief commanders. As he said, he wished to recover the royal power (or: the kingdom) for its rightful holders and for those who had held it continuously in the previous time of his predecessors and forefathers, before the "Party Kings," [Seleucids and Parthians] and [wished] to gather it together again under one head and one monarch.⁶⁵

In addition, a handful of passages from the Sasanian inscriptions offer intriguing, yet inconclusive primary source parallels to the secondary and tertiary Islamic and Roman material.

In broad terms, the two realms' use and understanding of the past changed as their relationship, power balance, and cultural understandings of history changed. As they became familiar with each other and accepted each other's right to exist in the late third and early fourth centuries, their diplomatic discourse presented this status quo as the unquestioned state of affairs that had existed since the beginning of time.

The extant textual evidence for Rome and Sasanian Iran's first appraisals of each other indicates that the past provided an important field of debate. It is unclear which culture first deployed the past as an interpretive or ideological tool after their initial clashes, though it is likely that it was the Romans who initially sought to understand the nature of Sasanian power and Rome's proper reaction to it in terms of the Achaemenid past. Although all scholars might not agree with this statement, the recurrence of this Achaemenid interpretation in the later Islamic historical and poetic traditions suggests that it was completely integrated into the Sasanians' conception of their heritage, if not as an originally indigenous tradition, then as something appropriated from the Romans.⁶⁶ No matter who introduced it, once in the field of debate, it quickly became an important and recurrent theme in the two realms' polemical encounters.

Rather than return to this debate, which has been nearly exhausted, here I examine the evidence from the perspective of cross-cultural interaction and identity formation between the empires. It is important to underscore

that the Romans and Sasanians understood the Achaemenid dynasty in very different ways. Roman knowledge of the Achaemenids' identity, ancestry, and deeds derived from the Greek, historical tradition.⁶⁷ The Sasanians, in contrast, understood their "ancestors" through the logic of oral, epic discourse and local legend and heroic activity.⁶⁸ The Sasanians knew those we call the Achaemenids to be a part of the mythical Kayānid dynasty and did not call the Achaemenids by that name.⁶⁹

Some scholars have questioned whether that the Sasanians had any knowledge of a previous Persian empire at all. Some even argued that the Sasanians' invocation of the Achaemenids in the Roman sources was entirely a Roman invention. They based their argument fundamentally on the fact that the Sasanians do not specifically or directly identify their ancestors (*ahēnagān/progonoi*) as the Achaemenids.⁷⁰ This assertion only holds, however, if one sets an anachronistic modern scholarly understanding of the Achaemenids as the ideal.⁷¹ While this approach offered an important corrective to earlier notions that the Sasanians consciously sought to resurrect the Achaemenid empire, it ignores the power of the early Sasanians' less-than-historical understanding of their place in Iranian and Persian history and does not offer a useful framework for understanding the past in the dynamic of cross-cultural interaction between Roman and Iran

For memory to be useful in a political sense—that is, for it to convince people of the historical identity, and thus the legitimacy, of a regime, not to mention mobilize them to act in the interests of the state—it need not be accurate, only broadly coherent.⁷² The Sasanians' appreciation of their ancestors was not historically accurate; however, it was both consistent with their worldview and, considering the anxiety it caused the Romans, useful.⁷³ This approach also assumes that the Sasanians' historical knowledge was static and makes no allowance for the possibility that they had the capacity to learn, adapt, and change from cross-cultural interaction. Although much different from Dārayavauš, who speaks to us from his royal inscriptions, or the Dareios that Herodotus crafts, the Sasanian Dārāy ī Dārāyān presented a useful tool for fashioning a genealogy that superseded Parthian claims to Iran's royal lineages and became a useful ideological explanation for aggression against the Romans.

The first contacts between Severus Alexander and Ardašīr I began the long process of interaction and confrontation and set the creative reuse and invention of the past as a common field of debate for later contacts. The fundamental text of their initial interchange comes from Cassius Dio. Since his writings derive partly from his own official experience and access to diplomatic communications, it is possible that he encountered Ardašīr I's claims

firsthand.⁷⁴ Dio reflects Roman shock over Ardašīr I's audacious battlefield successes and explains:

He [Ardašīr I] accordingly became a source of fear to us; for he was encamped with a large army over and against not Mesopotamia only but Syria also and boasted that he would win back everything that the ancient Persians had once held as far as the Grecian Sea. It was, he said, his rightful inheritance from his forefathers.⁷⁵

According to Cassius Dio, Ardašīr I opened his invasion of the Roman East by calling into question the legitimacy of the status quo in the eastern Mediterranean, asserting that he would return things to their original and correct state—that is, the order of things that existed under his “ancestors.” Herodian’s account, which opened this section, follows Dio’s but embellishes it with many historical details,⁷⁶ including the identity of the ancestors (*progonoi*), whom Dio does not name.⁷⁷ It is likely therefore that the Sasanians initially introduced these ancestral claims, as the Roman sources themselves imply, and the Romans then modified, embellished, and “corrected” them to fit their textually based understanding of the Achaemenids.⁷⁸ First- and second-century Roman emperors and authors had reflected on Parthian claims in Achaemenid terms, though always disparagingly; and the Parthians themselves appear to have cultivated a certain attachment to the Achaemenids, implying, like the Sasanians, some lineal or spiritual relationship.⁷⁹ Reference to the Achaemenids, which Roman sources once used to signify the Parthians’ empty boasts, became a grudging admission of the Sasanians’ potential threat, in the light of their military victories. Once the Romans introduced this historically accurate interpretation of the Sasanian claims, the Sasanians appear to have appropriated the *interpretatio romana* and, combined with their own cultural understandings, integrated it as a potent ideological statement, aimed primarily at a Roman, rather than an internal, audience.

The Romans too turned to the past as a means of interpreting the present, especially when it came time to formulate a counterthreat to the Sasanians. When Ardašīr I invaded the eastern Roman frontier, Severus Alexander’s regime responded with an evocation of the highlights of Roman military history, recounting how Roman emperors such as Augustus, Trajan, and Septimius Severus won many victories over the Parthian empire.⁸⁰ In issuing such a warning to Ardašīr I, Severus Alexander constructed himself as next in line to these famous *Augusti semper victores* and attempted to cast Ardašīr I as next in line to the inferior and subject Parthian kings (an identity the Parthians themselves doubtless did not accept). Scattered passages in the

notoriously untrustworthy *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (SHA) and a handful of eclectic regional inscriptions and graffiti have tempted some scholars to read these passages as evidence of a sort of “Alexandromania” on the part of the Romans under Severus Alexander.⁸¹ Although this would add an interesting element to Roman-Sasanian ideological exchange, no reliable sources exist that can substantiate this tantalizing implication.⁸² The regime of Gordian III celebrated the empire’s declaration of war with consciously archaizing athletic games in honor of Minerva, evoking Pallas Athena’s role in defeating Xerxes in 480–470 B.C.E., and Athena as the patroness of Alexander’s initial campaign.⁸³

After the capture of Valerian, as an answer to this challenge, the emperor Gallienus did attempt to appropriate aspects of Alexander the Great’s visual and political persona.⁸⁴ Although there is no evidence of direct engagement with Persia—or much other evidence from Gallienus’s reign for that matter—given his wild eclecticism in his search for ideas of divine kingship, it is not surprising that Alexander the Great would be an attractive archetype. It appears Gallienus intended this image primarily for propaganda solely for internal consumption, since, in keeping with his ambivalence toward his father or his extreme pragmatism, he never attempted a campaign to revenge Šāpūr I’s insult or free Valerian.⁸⁵ Although emerging haphazardly from individual emperors, Roman propaganda involving Alexander stimulated the Sasanians to reconstruct and refashion their own use of the Achaemenids and Alexander.⁸⁶

The next grouping of evidence comes from the mid-fourth century and dealings between Šāpūr II and Constantius II. The Roman sources, Ammianus Marcellinus being the most prominent, echo Dio’s description of the exchange between Severus Alexander and Ardašīr I. However, here we find a more refined exchange of boasts, which hints that such vaunting was expected in the two courts’ exchanges when relations were bad. In Ammianus’s account, Šāpūr II claims: “That my forefather’s empire reached as far the river Strymon and the boundaries of Macedonia even your own ancient records bear witness: these lands it is fitting that I should demand”; and then requires their return.⁸⁷ Significantly, like Ardašīr I in Dio’s account, Šāpūr II does not overtly name his ancestors as the Achaemenids, though he displays a general knowledge of the extent of their empire. Ammianus’s account adds a new element that Dio Cassius and Herodian do not mention: an explicit reference to the Greco-Roman historical literary tradition, the “ancient records” (*antiquitates vestrae*) in the two realms’ debate. This is an important detail insofar as it points to a consciousness of the tension between historical thought, ethnic identity, and the concomitant ancestral

claims on the part of one party, if not both. If evidence from Zonaras is accurate, the Romans not only became familiar with the Sasanians' claims but turned them on their head in counterclaims:

When [. . .] Constantius was marching from the West and returned to Byzantium, envoys from the Persians met him around Sirmium. They were sent by Shapur, who demanded that Mesopotamia and Armenia should be returned to Persia, that they might put an end to the war with Rome; for these territories had been a source of problems to them since the time of their ancestors; but if he (i.e., Constantius) did not comply, he made it clear to the emperor he would appeal to Ares to judge the outcome of the matter. On this matter, Constantius sent back the reply that he was amazed that Shapur seemed to have forgotten that the Persians were once enslaved to the Macedonians. When the Macedonians became subject to Rome, those who were in servitude to them became subject to the Romans. Shapur, angered by this, decided upon war.⁸⁸

The distant past thus became an arena for the rhetorical battle that played out in diplomatic communication.

Roman and Sasanian manipulations of the memory of the Achaemenids and Alexander were an active focus of debate and contention only during the first two centuries of coexistence and quickly receded into the background as they became less compelling or useful to the sovereigns. The Achaemenid kings had a quiet but significant presence in the official history of the Sasanians to the end of the dynasty, as reflected in the *Kārnāmag ī Ārdašīr*, Ṭabarī, and the *Šāhnāma*.⁸⁹ A synod of Christian bishops and courtiers meeting in Ctesiphon could still hail Ḳosrow I as a "new Cyrus" with the full force of Isaiah's prophesy behind such a characterization, and Roman pedants could recount the ancient history of Iran according to Herodotus, but these sixth-century expressions were directed toward internal audiences.⁹⁰ The Sasanians even appropriated the image and identity of Alexander for their own purposes—featuring him as a lost scion of the Achaemenid/Kayānid dynasty—but like the Achaemenid legends, he never again took center stage in the debate between the two realms.⁹¹

Despite the huge impact that coexistence would have on both empires, and the immediate acknowledgment in Roman literary sources that something fundamental had changed in Rome's relationship with the power to the east, extant artistic material reflects the initial clash between Ardašīr I and Severus Alexander only in subdued terms.⁹² This is not surprising, considering that their struggle ended in a virtual draw and return to the status quo with both parties suffering heavy losses.⁹³ A handful of coin types mark

Severus Alexander's departure and "victorious" return from his campaign. A reverse from 233, closely following a type that appears on certain of Trajan's coins, depicts Severus Alexander crowned by a Victory, holding a boundary marker with personifications of the Tigris and Euphrates at his feet. Although he certainly did not expand the empire's boundaries to include the whole of Mesopotamia, as the type suggests, it is likely that he appropriated the type to draw a parallel between his deeds and those of his predecessor, in keeping with his program of neoconservatism. Other types struck after his campaign allude to victory, military prowess, divine aid, or imperially imposed peace, but none directly represent or refer to the Sasanians.⁹⁴ To this visual evidence one can add Severus Alexander's assumption of the title *Persicus* (possibly *Parthicus*) *Maximus* and the SHA's dazzling, yet fictional account of a *pompa triumphalis* following his campaign, which may, however, distantly reflect an actual staged triumph.⁹⁵ Although the rich details of the exotic animals and boundless wealth that the SHA describe are fiction, it is almost certain that Severus Alexander did tap into Rome's ritual and visual topography before and after his campaign by offering sacrifices and dedicating some sort of memento at the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol or sponsoring games in the Circus Maximus.

Emboldened by Severus Alexander's death, Ardašīr I pushed into the Roman empire and seized the important mercantile and defensive city of Hatra. Far beyond any simple raid, Ardašīr I ultimately was able to exercise power over south Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf coast, and eastern Arabia, controlling with these territories the sea trade that flowed through them.⁹⁶ Despite these gains at the Romans' expense, Ardašīr I evidently left no statement, in the form of either a rock relief or numismatic imagery, that spoke to the Sasanians' initial understanding of the Romans.⁹⁷ Ardašīr I concentrated his rupestrian efforts on internal concerns: proclaiming the destruction of the Arsacid dynasty,⁹⁸ his dominance over Ērānšāhr,⁹⁹ and the divine origins of his kingship and actions.¹⁰⁰ Ascendancy over Anērān and Rome would appear as a new ideology and central propagandistic and artistic theme only under his son, Šāpūr I. Once it appeared, however, it initiated a remarkable transformation in Sasanian imperial visual culture.

4 Šāpūr I, King of Kings of Iran and Non-Iran

Šāpūr I's prodigious military successes and innovations in Sasanian kingship had a great impact on Sasanian royal identity and visual culture for this reason, as well as the fact that his reign, of all Sasanian rulers, yields the greatest number of triumphal images depicting Roman emperors. Šāpūr I's reign is pivotal for Roman and Sasanian agonistic exchange, as it marks the first time in the two realms' relationship that the imperial identity of one king dramatically changed in response to the existence and claims of the other. It appears perhaps unsurprising that Šāpūr I would celebrate his victories and incorporate them into his self-representations, especially with the added perspective we are afforded by our knowledge of the succeeding history of Sasanian royal ideology and the pivotal place that his reign held in it. However, in order to understand how early Sasanian concepts of royalty developed one must examine it from the temporal perspective of the third century when there was nothing necessarily inevitable about it, nor was there any precedent for it.

Under Šāpūr I, Sasanian royal ideology underwent a rapid series of important developments that radically reformed the bounds, claims, and identity of kingship in Iran and had a significant impact on Roman-Sasanian relations.¹ The shock that Šāpūr I's victories brought to the Roman empire and the gain in confidence that they wrought for the Sasanian royal identity were huge. Near the beginning of Šāpūr I's reign the Roman emperor Gordian III (238–244) invaded the Sasanian empire to punish the Sasanian capture of Hatra.² Despite initial success, the force withdrew after Gordian III's death, most likely as a result of a coup instigated by Gordian's successor, Philip (244–249), though Šāpūr did not hesitate to take credit for it and capitalize on it.³ Philip sued for peace and paid a large indemnity to Šāpūr I in order to hasten back to Rome to consolidate his position, a transac-

tion that Šāpūr I portrayed both textually and visually as submission, suggesting the concomitant reduction of the Roman empire and emperor to tributary status. Over the next decade and a half Šāpūr succeeded in annexing Armenia, defeating a 60,000-man army sent against him by Rome, and sacking Antioch as well as numerous other cities in Syria and Cappadocia.⁴ The apogee of Šāpūr I's success came in 258/9 when he destroyed a Roman army led in person by the emperor Valerian (253–260), capturing and deporting the emperor, his court, and the remnants of the army in the process.⁵ Capitalizing on the Roman empire's descent into chaos at the news of Valerian's ignominious fate, Šāpūr invaded Syria, Cappadocia, and Cilicia, sacked Antioch a second time, and deported its skilled craftsmen to Pārs and Xūzestān.⁶

The challenge presented by the claims of the Arsacid dynasty thoroughly overcome, Šāpūr I turned to contesting Rome's military dominance and universal claims. To consolidate Ardašīr I's position over the Arsacids, the Sasanian court under Ardašīr I manipulated the concept of Ērānšāhr ("kingdom of Iran") centering in Pārs.⁷ The aim of this was to appropriate from the Arsacids the royal Kayānid (and with it, perhaps, the "Achaemenid") heritage as the birthright of the Sasanian dynasty. Šāpūr I inherited this concept of Ērānšāhr from his father, but inspired by his military successes and ambitions, he expanded his father's claims of dominion over Ērān, to ascendancy over Ērān ud Anērān (literally, "Iran and Non-Iran"). Reflecting this, the title *šāhān šāh ī Ērān ud Anērān* ("king of kings of Iran and Non-Iran"), a phrase that appears on the ŠKZ and is inscribed onto Šāpūr's rock relief at Naqš-e Rostam, was a notable emendation to what was official Sasanian royal titlature under his father: *šāhān šāh ī Ērān*, "king of kings of Ērān."⁸ Ērānšāhr was roughly the extent of the old Parthian empire and was conceptually a localized kingship. "Non-Iran" was, in a sense, localized too and literally referred to Šāpūr I's new conquests in Central and South Asia and the eastern Roman empire, as listed in the ŠKZ.⁹ However, paralleling his rock reliefs, Šāpūr I capitalized on the wider symbolism of this title. As Šāpūr I deployed it, Ērān ud Anērān carried the additional sense of a claim of universal sovereignty with Pārs at the center of Iran, Iran as the cosmological center, and all other nations (Mid. Pers. *šahr*, Parth. *šahr*, Gr. *ethnē*) arrayed around it.¹⁰ Subsequently the scope of the Sasanian king's rightful dominion extended outside the Iranian sphere in an almost universal sense and included, most notably, the Kēsar ī Hrōm, who was counted as his tributary, marking the beginning of a war of imperial ideologies on a global scale.¹¹

Šāpūr I used the Roman empire and its rulers to sculpt his identity. Despite the potentially all-encompassing nature of Šāpūr I's title, his ideolog-

ical productions betray a certain tension regarding his official formulation of Rome as tributary and subject.¹² Šāpūr I's Ka'ba inscription lists many other lands where he sought battle, yet Rome is the only power that warrants an extended account. Šāpūr I's Roman campaigns and victories occupy roughly a third of the inscription and are dealt with in relative detail, while other lands that he conquered are merely listed over the course of a few lines.¹³

Much as they adopted Šāpūr I's title *šāhān šāh ī Ērān ud Anērān*, subsequent Sasanian kings of kings appear to have continued Šāpūr I's ambivalent understanding of Rome's identity and place as a tributary and a great power, which helped bolster the Sasanian sovereign's place.¹⁴ Although inscribed for a different purpose, that of legitimating the king's usurpation, Narseh's Paikuli inscription corroborates Šāpūr I's statements, as it concedes to Rome a privileged position among all other powers. In the section that records the sovereigns and provinces that recognized Narseh as the rightful Sasanian sovereign, all local powers show their allegiance by "standing by [Narseh] in advice and counsel."¹⁵ As Ze'ev Rubin pointed out, Narseh describes Rome's acknowledgment using a different turn of phrase: "and the Caesar (*Kēsar*), and the Romans stood in supplication (*lāb-gārih*), peace and friendship towards us."¹⁶ The Romans take precedence as a power whose willingness to offer peace and friendship was important, and friendship itself implies a certain sense of parity. However, continuing the spirit of Šāpūr I's establishment of dominance over the Roman empire, the Roman emperor comes in "supplication," although Rome stood at this point in a position of relative strength.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF SASANIAN VISUAL CULTURE UNDER ŠĀPŪR I

Šāpūr I's Roman victories wrought noticeable changes in many aspects of the king of kings' self-representation. His rock reliefs, his palace at Bīšāpūr, and even an engineering project, the Band-e Qaisar ("Caesar's Bridge") at Šūštar, all exhibit an intriguing interplay of Roman and Sasanian elements and reflect an overarching theme of captured Roman art and science in the service of the Sasanian king of kings. Taken as a whole, the evidence indicates a concerted effort to present a unified program across a number of media, with Šāpūr I's conflicts with the Romans as an ever-present focus.

A massive influx of Roman prisoners followed Šāpūr's military successes, peaking after his victory over Valerian and successful raids into Syria and

Asia Minor.¹⁷ Šāpūr I's urban and artistic commissions show many signs of Roman architectural, engineering, and artistic techniques and ideas.¹⁸ While their impact should not be exaggerated, Roman workmen clearly made an important contribution to Šāpūr I's architectural and rupestrian expressions. Šāpūr I no doubt prized the products of Roman engineering and craftsmanship for their practical value, but also displayed them as testaments and triumphal monuments to his victories. Even the *Šāhnāma* recalls the handiwork of Šāpūr I's Roman prisoners with awe; it makes special reference to the bridge at Šūštar as a monument both to Šāpūr I's conquests and to the "science of the philosophers of Rūm," a site whose Roman influence archaeology has borne out.¹⁹

As in his inscriptions, two major themes dominate Šāpūr's visual expressions: invincibility and a divine mandate to order and rule not only Ērān but Anērān. Šāpūr's rock reliefs offer a fascinating glimpse into how he re-fashioned Sasanian kingship and expanded its claims in response to Rome. Šāpūr experimented with several different ways of expressing these ideas, and he refined their portrayal over the course of his reign. Although some expressions dealt with auxiliary themes, Šāpūr's relationship with Rome lay at the core of the majority of his sizable body of expressions, both large and small and in a variety of media. The extant evidence includes both monumental and portable media of the sort that could travel between realms, which implies a complex dynamic between the king's identity and his potential internal and external audiences, both of which included power bases in need of cultivation and rivals to be cowed. Šāpūr's artistic, architectural, and textual creations show evidence of a lively interaction between indigenous and Roman elements employing the visual and symbolic languages of both, yet all the while focused on shaping the identity and fame of the king of kings. Considering their location at the heart of Sasanian Ērānšāhr, Šāpūr likely aimed the majority of his rock reliefs primarily at his internal audience, although travelers and envoys could have observed them as well.²⁰

In addition to engineering works, Roman elements played an increasingly significant role in the monumental rock reliefs that Šāpūr I commissioned throughout his reign.²¹ As well as being his most enduring tool of commemoration, considering the time and resources required to create them, they provide a useful insight into Šāpūr's leading concerns and core propagandistic drives. There is little consensus on the exact chronology of Šāpūr I's reliefs; however, approached with care, they can serve as a valuable primary source regarding his self-identity and relationship with the Romans.²² Much as in Roman engineering, Roman ideas, techniques, and even personages entered into Šāpūr I's rock reliefs, and thus into Sasanian visual culture, se-

lectively and with careful thought given to how they could be integrated with indigenous concepts and forms as well with the king of kings' triumphal program as a whole.

Classical sculptural forms influenced Šāpūr I's reliefs, especially Bīšāpūr III and II, although attempts to discern Roman sculptural stylistic developments have, not surprisingly, ended in frustration.²³ One can parse out Roman from Iranian elements and posit precursors, but stopping at such an analysis distorts the overall intent of Šāpūr I's expressions, which was to present a unified articulation of his identity and power. Although extant examples in the Roman empire might provide an interesting array of *comparanda*, their meaning does not necessarily correspond with the Sasanian expressive intent just because of formal similarities. Although formal similarities exist between aspects of Roman and Sasanian visual culture, this does not automatically mean a simple, direct equivalency between the two in every instance. Such parallels must be understood from the perspective of the realms' agonistic and conversational interaction, which provides a more challenging and useful means of interpreting such similarities. Šāpūr I's rock reliefs demonstrate a focused will to appropriate and creatively reinterpret Roman triumphal motifs and iconography to shape the identity of the Roman emperor, while enfolding them in the traditions of Iranian royal rock reliefs.

Šāpūr I's early rock reliefs dealt with many of the same concerns that Ardašīr I, the defeated Arsacid dynasty, and for that matter several of Šāpūr's successors felt compelled to address in theirs: control over the aristocratic hierarchy, divine mandate to rule, and military invincibility. These early reliefs provided a point of departure for those commissioned after Roman victories. One of Šāpūr I's early reliefs, Naqš-e Rajāb I, depicts him with his nobles ranged behind him to express (or, perhaps, impose) the idea of aristocratic support for the king of kings and his secure place at the apex of the social hierarchy. Formal considerations aside, this relief follows in a long tradition of Middle Iranian reliefs, including the Parthian reliefs depicting Mithradates I (171–139/8 B.C.E.) on horseback at Kōng-e Nowrūzi receiving the submission of the nobles of a newly conquered province, Bīsotūn I where Mithradates II (123–88/87 B.C.E.) stands receiving the submission of his governors, and the relief at Tang-e Sarvāk II that depicts a simple scene of homage with vassals literally lined up behind the local prince, who is enthroned.²⁴ Members of Ardašīr I's court observe his investiture at Fīrūzābād II and Naqš-e Rajāb III. Ardašīr I's relief at Salmās in Azerbaijan (with Šāpūr I as co-regent, wearing the same crown), which depicts the investiture of Armenian governors, expresses aspects of this preoccupation as well.

Located on the “Great Northern Route” linking the Bactrian Plain with India, Rag-e Bībī portrays the king of kings hunting rhinoceroses, in a composition that is familiar from Sasanian silver, even if the quarry is not, and celebrates Šāpūr I’s conquest of the region around Kāpiśa up to the Khyber Pass.²⁵

These reliefs function as both statements and demonstrations of the king of kings’ control over his vassals or forces of chaos. Kōng-e Nowrūzi, Salmās, and Rag-e Bībī were inherently imperial statements, created in a formerly hostile area, while in the case of Bīsotūn II or Naqš-e Rajāb I the relief took control of a symbolically charged space. Naqš-e Rajāb IV, which (at least according to formal indications) comes from later in Šāpūr I’s reign, depicts a scene of divine investiture reminiscent of Ardašīr’s symmetrical relief at Naqš-e Rostam and his other investiture scenes, but without the added apocalyptic commentary on the king’s victory over a rival. These reliefs form the minority, and, in the other five, such concerns, though present, are subordinate to Šāpūr I’s developing claims to universal rule, which the Roman emperors shown play an important role in expressing.²⁶

Šāpūr I’s three reliefs at Bīšāpūr and one at Naqš-e Rostam establish the king of kings’ relationship with the Roman empire through the figures of three Roman rulers. Their different poses, gestures, and physical relationship to Šāpūr himself not only recorded his deeds in a historical sense but offered an existential comment on both Šāpūr’s and the Roman rulers’ identity. Each emperor played a different role: the prone figure of Gordian III expresses an apocalyptically parallel victory, like that of his father; Philip the Arab’s genuflection indicates Rome’s submission to the king of kings; and Valerian, with his wrists held by Šāpūr I, shows his victorious nature and battlefield prowess. Roman emperors appear in Naqš-e Rostam and Dārābgird as the sole focus of the relief and likely represent an encapsulated recording of events.²⁷ The three Bīšāpūr reliefs, however, depict additional figures and ideas, with the Roman emperors appearing more as permanent symbolic appendages to the king of kings.

The Sasanian king of kings’ relationship with the Roman emperor and the identity of the Roman emperor himself were not stable in Sasanian propaganda in this early period.²⁸ While Bīšāpūr I shows experimentation in conceptualizing Šāpūr I’s first victory over the Romans, his later three post-Valerian reliefs demonstrate a more established mode of expression. Šāpūr I’s textual and visual expressions contain several different formulations of his relationship with the Roman emperor and of the Roman emperor’s “ideologically correct” identity. The other visual material from the reign of Šāpūr I, including mosaics and minor arts, and especially his ŠKZ inscription parallel many of the ideas in the later rock reliefs and with them

give clues to at least the final stages of this expansion if not all the changes along the way.

Whereas the Romans at first interpreted the Sasanians through a somewhat archaizing paradigm set by their visual and military relationship with the Parthians, under Šāpūr I the Sasanians observed the Romans with contemporary eyes and had a keen interest in recording details as they saw them. The figures of the Romans include many details that the artisans observed from Roman imperial regalia. The attention that the reliefs give to accurately portraying the emperors reflects the importance of the Romans for contemporary events and identities.

KING OF KINGS AND DEMON OF DEMONS

In Bīšāpūr I, the earliest of his Roman reliefs, Šāpūr I interprets his rather unexpected Roman victory as divinely ordained through the paradigm that Ardašīr established with his final relief at Naqš-Rostam. Ardašīr I's relief at Naqš-e Rostam is the first and the most potent Sasanian expression of this concept (see fig. 2). The relief depicts what would become the classic scene of Sasanian equestrian investiture and triumph and sets up a clear paradigmatic association between Ardašīr and the "great god" Ohrmazd through mirror-image symmetry. Ardašīr rides a horse of the same general size, grooming, and bridling as Ohrmazd's and holds his body in nearly the same pose, except that while Ohrmazd holds a barsom, Ardašīr brings his bent left index finger up to his mouth in a symbolic gesture of deference and respect long attested in the ancient Near East and prominent in both Achaemenian and Sasanian iconography.²⁹ A beardless attendant stands behind Ardašīr, holding a fan or canopy over the king's head with his right hand. Like Ardašīr, he holds his left hand to his mouth in the gesture of reverence; however, unlike the king of kings it is not clear to whom he directs the gesture or whether he can even behold the god directly: does he venerate Ohrmazd or the likeness of the great god in his representative, the great king? Ardašīr is exactly the same size as Ohrmazd (crown notwithstanding) and can be differentiated only by his open right hand with which he accepts the diadem of sovereignty that Ohrmazd bestows upon him with his firmly clasped right hand.

Complementing the parallel between great god and great king, the relief's symmetry forges a further paradigmatic link between the triumph of the king and the triumph of the god. Under the hoof of Ardašīr's charger lies the head of his erstwhile adversary, the last Arsacid king, Ardawān IV,

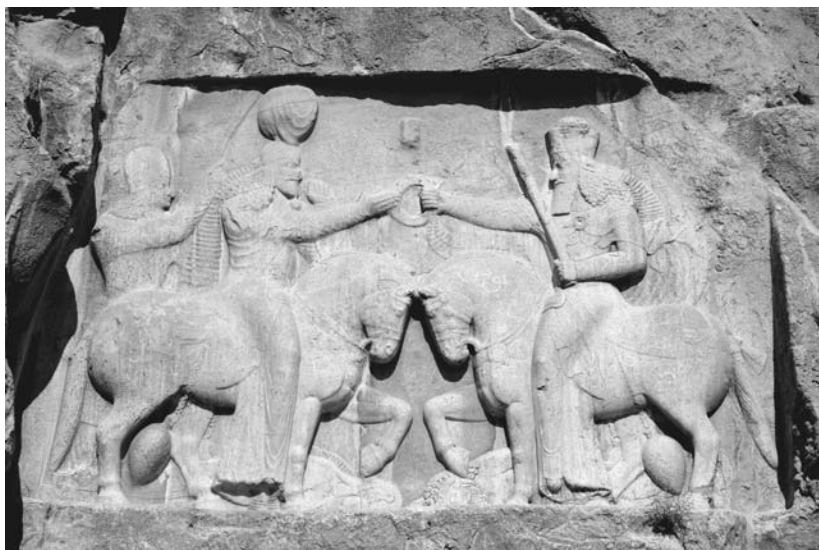


Figure 2. Rock relief of Ardašīr I (r. 224–239/240) at the Achaemenid necropolis at Naqš-e Rostam, Fārs province, Iran. (Photo by author.)

whom Ardašīr defeated to become king of kings of Iran. Ardawān is clearly identifiable by his Parthian “tiara,” which is engraved with his clan *nīšān*.³⁰ Ohrmazd’s horse tramples the similarly supine figure of Ahreman (from Av. Anra Mainyu, “Malifificent Spirit”), the ultimate embodiment of evil and the enemy par excellence, marked as such by animal ears and writhing serpentine legs and hair.³¹ According to the composition’s stark symmetry, Ardašīr’s victory over Ardawān in the worldly realm (*pad gētīg*) was not only an analogous prefiguration of Ohrmazd’s final victory over Ahreman at the end of time, but in purifying the existence of this noxious evil audaciously implies that in doing so he in fact hastens that ultimate apocalyptic victory and return to the unmixed state.³² At Bīšāpūr, the mounted figure of Ohrmazd on the left bestows the diadem on the king of kings (whose image is unfortunately highly abraded), who presents a symmetrical reflection of the deity (see fig. 3). According to the logic of the composition, Šāpūr’s defeat and purported execution of Gordian III, who is depicted under the hooves of the *šāhān šāh*’s horse, is the earthly prefiguration of Ohrmazd’s apocalyptic defeat of Ahreman, who lies in his expected place under the hooves of the god’s mount. Both assume the same pose, catching the viewer with a frontal grimace, in a departure from the profile portrayals of Ahreman and Ardawān in Naqš-e Rostam I.



Figure 3. Rock relief of Šāpūr I (r. 239/240–272) at Bisāpūr (Bisāpūr I), Fars province, Iran. (Photo by author.)

Since Bīšāpūr I presents a composition similar to Ardašīr's Naqš-Rostam I, many have stopped at asserting that the former was a simple mimicry of the latter, implying they express exactly the same idea.³³ Although his father had produced the "classic" version of the composition to express his supreme achievement of overthrowing the Arsacid dynasty, in Šāpūr's redeployment of it, the relief's political and eschatological dynamic shifts in concert with Šāpūr's burgeoning cosmocratic ideology. In appropriating the composition of his father's investiture, Šāpūr I made an implicit claim about dynastic continuity, indicating that he not only held the diadem rightfully but could fill the same cosmological space as his father. With this appropriation Šāpūr I set up an analogy between his father's achievements and those of his own that obviously measured up to the baseline his father set.

Šāpūr I capitalized on the composition's apocalyptic commentary and political dualism. With Ardašīr's relief as precedent, Šāpūr I continued and developed the tactic of casting one's enemies visually and textually as agents of the "Lie" and the *dēwān*, thus establishing it as a common practice for later Sasanian kings if not a fully official component of Sasanian royal ideology.³⁴ Elements of the ŠKZ inscription offer valuable perspectives on Šāpūr's relief, the ideas that motivated it, and the early development of an enduring cosmological interpretation of the Romans. Together, the later reliefs and the ŠKZ inscription formed a unified, official program that inflected Sasanian polemical understanding of the Romans for many years to come.³⁵

In Bīšāpūr I, Šāpūr I visually predicates the cosmological identity of the Roman sovereign on that of Ahreman, the "demon of demons."³⁶ Gordian III's position implies that his identity is similar in substance to Ahreman's, as Šāpūr I's is to Ohrmazd, "the Wise Lord"; the Roman emperor's speech and actions are *daivic* as much as the king of kings' are *ahuric*. This symmetry is present in the ŠKZ too, which describes the key actions and words of Kēsar ī Hrōm using terms of *daivic* speech, the most prominent of which are "lie" (*druxtān*) and "do harm" (*winās kardan*).³⁷ Šāpūr I's later two reliefs at Bīšāpūr do not include the king of kings' and Roman emperor's supernatural equivalents. However, despite the absence of Ohrmazd and Ahreman, the idea of the supernatural parallels between the king of kings and Ohrmazd, on the one hand, and Gordian and Ahreman should be understood as implicitly governing the identities of Šāpūr I and Gordian III in the later reliefs.

Although he appropriated this composition, Šāpūr I's relationship with the Roman emperor was not quite as straightforward as Ardašīr I's relationship with Ardawān, or for that matter Ohrmazd's relationship with Ahreman. The Roman emperor offered many more propagandistic possi-

bilities in the royal imagination than the simple role of a defeated and supplanted tyrant. The Sasanians knew Rome as an ancient power, and it was obvious that the elimination of one or two of its emperors was not akin to the destruction of the entire entity. In this fact lies the difference between Ardašīr's and Šāpūr I's symmetrical investiture/triumphal reliefs. As in the case of Ahreman, death and destruction were the only conceivable outcome available for Ardawān and the Arsacid dynasty. Yet during the time of Šāpūr I the Roman empire's right to exist was never called into question, although individual emperors might be seduced to *daivic* activity.

Šāpūr I crafted the figure of Philip the Arab to bolster his own identity as a truly great king of kings, casting Philip visually and textually as a subject king. Philip appears before the king of kings' horse, kneeling with his arms outstretched, at once begging for the king's mercy and offering his submission, a portrayal that Šāpūr I repeats in all his subsequent reliefs.³⁸ Each of the four reliefs that contain the figure of Philip depict him differently, suggesting that the representation matured over time. In Bīšāpūr I, Philip's body faces the picture plane, and he kneels deeply, so that the shin of his right leg (the forward one) is on the ground with his left leg splayed out behind him. His *paludamentum*, fastened with a fibula, billows out slightly behind him, and on a baldric cast over his right shoulder he carries a sword with an eagle-headed pommel of a type recognizable from later Roman imperial representations.³⁹ Around his head are traces of a laurel crown matching numismatic depictions. The later reliefs—Naqš-e Rostam VI and Bīšāpūr III and II—alter the position of Philip's legs, bringing it into conformity with Roman representations of similar gestures (see figs. 4, 5, and 6). Naqš-e Rostam VI shows Philip in the act of kneeling, with his forward knee just inches from hitting the ground; his *paludamentum* billows out behind him to accentuate the motion. Bīšāpūr III and II contain roughly the same composition with respect to the placement of the Roman emperors but represent a compromise regarding the genuflection: Philip plants his knee (but not his shin) firmly on the ground, while his cape billows out behind him to express recently completed motion.⁴⁰ In all cases the emperor holds out his arms toward Šāpūr, though in somewhat different postures. In Bīšāpūr I he appears to grasp the legs of the king of kings' horse; at Naqš-e Rostam his arms are held open and apart, as in Bīšāpūr II and perhaps originally in Bīšāpūr III, though they are now largely destroyed.

The figure of Philip the Arab disturbs the symmetry that a viewer (ancient or modern) might expect in Bīšāpūr I from experience with Ardašīr I's precedent at Naqš-e Rostam. The relief visually departs from Ardašīr I's composition and adds an important comment on Šāpūr I's and the Roman



Figure 4. Rock relief of Šāpūr I at Naqš-e Rostam (Naqš-e Rostam VI), Fārs province, Iran. (Photo by author.)

empire's identity. Although there are questions about the image's origin and exact significance, its general sense is clear. As well as indicating a request for mercy, the kneeling figure of Philip asserts that the Roman emperor is subject to Šāpūr I and qualifies Šāpūr I as king of kings on a scale far surpassing that of his father: Šāpūr I is a ruler of emperors. The figure of Philip brings up an issue that has been a persistent topos for scholarship on Sasanian-Roman relations and will recur in this study: the origin and nature of the particular physical act of submission called *adoratio/proskynēsis* in the Roman cultural sphere and *namāz burdan* in later Middle Persian material.⁴¹

Since *proskynēsis* lies at the crux of many issues of Roman-Sasanian artistic and cultural interaction, this ritual action is also a useful point of investigation of the problem of cross-cultural influence as regards Šāpūr I's reliefs. Surprisingly, most inquiries have not taken into account primary Sasanian evidence when drawing conclusions about the act. Simply put, the image of an individual performing *proskynēsis* is unprecedented in early Sasanian, Parthian, and, for that matter, Achaemenid visual culture. In contrast, the act of kneeling had a relatively frequent and established place in Roman visual culture, especially as performed by Arscid (Parthian and Armenian) subject kings who were made to prostrate themselves by their Roman overlords. This suggests that it is much more likely that Šāpūr I appropriated the image, and quite possibly even the ritual of *adoratio/proskynēsis*, from Rome rather than vice versa. Furthermore,

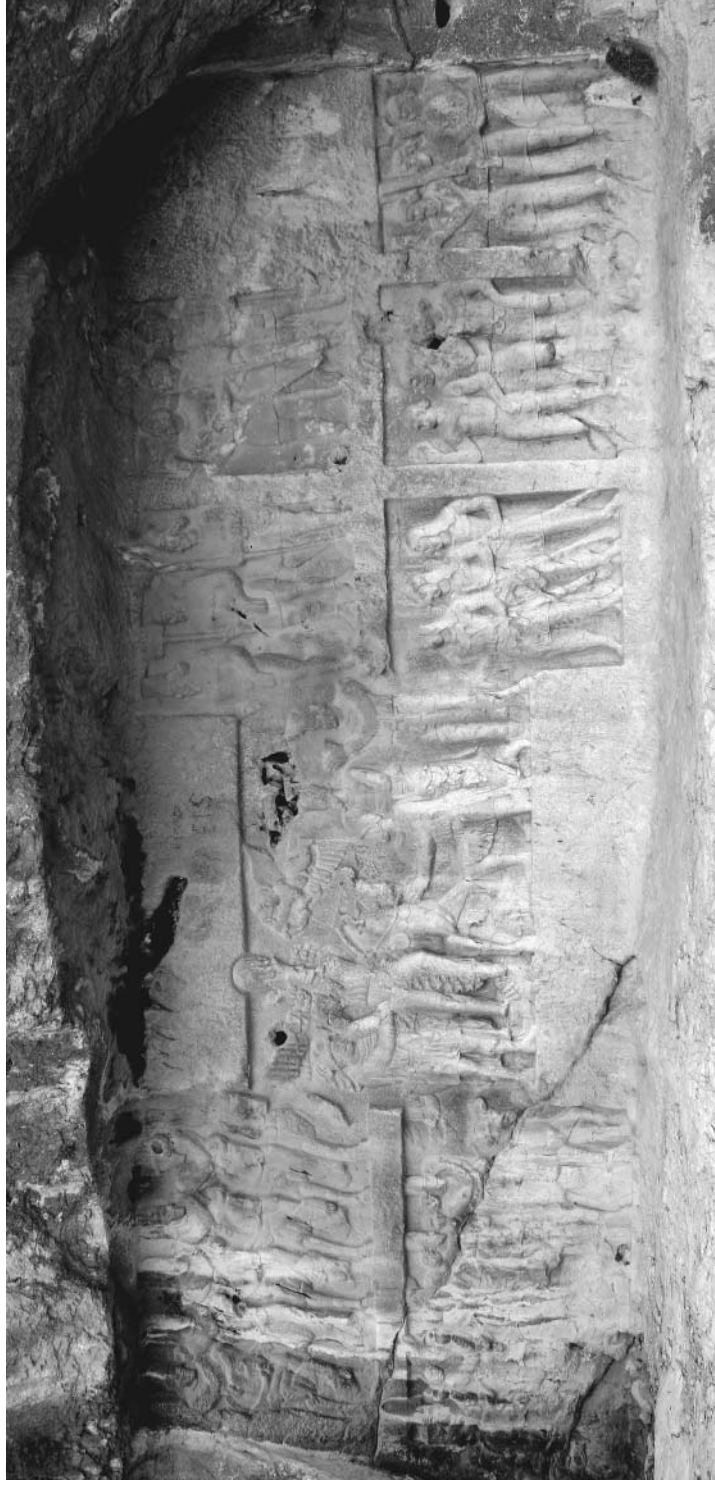


Figure 5. Rock relief of Šāpūr I at Bīšāpūr (Bīšāpūr II), Fārs province, Iran. (Photo by author.)

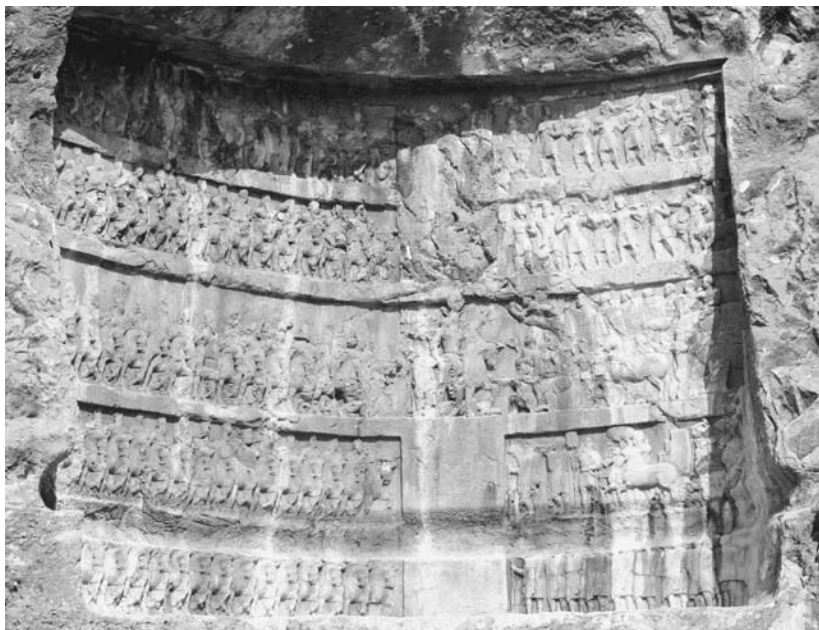


Figure 6. Rock relief of Šāpūr I at Bīšāpūr (Bīšāpūr III), Fārs province, Iran. (Photo by author.)

its appearance in his rock reliefs suggests that he applied it visually, if not ritually, in a manner roughly congruent with previous Roman usages.⁴²

Scholarship on this topic has hitherto conflated two issues relating to Philip the Arab's genuflection in the Sasanian reliefs: the problem of the artistic and technical influence of captured Roman soldiers and craftsmen, on the one hand; and the appropriation of the content itself, such as gestures or iconographical elements, on the other. Roman and Iranian sources alike attest to the massive population transfers, as do other artistic and engineering productions in Šāpūr I's foundations—Bīšāpūr in particular—so there is no doubt that Romans had some role to play in producing his later reliefs. Many scholars have identified formal elements such as increased naturalism, and the appearance of complex, multifigured scenes, as evidence of Roman artistic contribution.⁴³ While Ardašīr I produced several multifigured scenes evidently without the help of Roman craftsmen, details such as drapery, the mass of bodies, and the human form bear more of a resemblance to Roman sculpture than to any immediate Iranian precursor. Not all of Šāpūr

I's post-Valerian reliefs bear the same level of similarity to Roman sculptural forms; his relief at Naqš-Rostam is very different in terms of sculptural treatment, as compared to Bīšāpūr III, which displays the strongest resemblances. One can approach the question of Roman stylistic influence from the point of view of simple artistic influence or Roman technical superiority, as most have done. However, I feel it is important to point out that Roman sculptural influences entered Sasanian visual culture directly as a result of Šāpūr I's military victories and were deployed expressly to commemorate them. Roman sculptural forms are integrated with and even subordinate to the Sasanian tendency to divide the picture plane into repeating registers, a convention they appropriated from the Achaemenid reliefs at Persepolis. As such, these displays of technical and artistic influence were themselves monuments to Šāpūr I's military dominance, an exhibition of the spoils of war, in this case those relating to human capital, rather than the gifts of Promethean culture heroes.

Beyond the role of Roman sculptural forms and techniques is the question of the extent to which Šāpūr I understood, appropriated, and incorporated the content of Roman visual culture into his program of triumphal commemoration. A number of parallels exist with Roman imperial visual culture. In some instances scholars have posited lost Roman precursors in Mesopotamia or transferred the significance of Roman *comparanda* from the center of the Roman empire wholesale and directly to Šāpūr I's reliefs. K. Erdmann, H. Lusche, and R. Ghirshman proposed that Roman triumphal arches constructed in Mesopotamia after Trajan's victory might represent precursors.⁴⁴ Since no extant *comparanda* survive in Mesopotamia or within the areas Šāpūr I conquered, the exact inspiration and mode of contact must be left open. I would suggest that smaller, portable Roman material, like coins, cameos, and medallions, or even the memory of Roman craftsmen could have served as potential modes of transfer.⁴⁵ Although there were precedents for the iconographic detail as well as for the ritual performance of genuflection in the Roman cultural sphere, the act was still a Sasanian expression in Šāpūr I's reliefs. For this reason one must also search for clues in contemporary Sasanian evidence to explain the exact significance of the gesture in Šāpūr I's reliefs.

It is possible that Šāpūr I's triumph over the Roman emperors drew inspiration from Roman art; however, the clearest indication of how the Sasanians interpreted this appropriated gesture comes not from Roman visual material but again from Šāpūr I's inscriptions, in which we have a rare and valuable insight into the *šāhān šāh*'s understanding of what his images convey. In the ŠKZ, Šāpūr I claims that Philip came to him, submitted, and paid

him tribute after the death of Gordian. Šāpūr records that “the emperor Philip (*Filip[p]os Kēsar*) came to us as a suppliant and gave us five hundred thousand *dēnār* for ransom for (the army’s) lives and became tributary to us.”⁴⁶ Besides recording the basic events, Šāpūr adds commentary and casts the Roman emperor’s payment of ransom as an act of submission and the Roman emperor’s actions as those of a rebellious vassal.⁴⁷ The ŠKZ offers another interesting parallel. The translation of the ŠKZ into Greek is significant, especially in its juxtaposition to the Parthian version, the language of the other conquered regime. The Greek and Parthian texts of the inscription attest to the Sasanians’ use of the languages of conquered regimes to communicate their own propagandistic messages. The appropriated languages served not only as a tool of communication but also as a symbol of Sasanian dominance.

THE CAPTURE OF VALERIAN

The capture of Valerian and his army was undoubtedly Šāpūr’s crowning military achievement, and he foregrounds it in his reliefs as well as in the ŠKZ. The emperor Valerian appears in Šāpūr I’s relief at Naqš-e Rostam and in Bīšāpūr II and III. The reliefs always portray him standing with his wrists held by the king of kings in accordance with Šāpūr’s claim in the ŠKZ that he captured Valerian with his own hands.⁴⁸ In Bīšāpūr II and III, Valerian stands behind the king of kings, while in Naqš-e Rostam he stands in front of Šāpūr, facing him. His tunic sleeves cover his hands so as not to pollute the king of kings, an act that corresponds roughly to expected court protocol for Sasanian nobles.⁴⁹ Despite the assertions of certain extremely hostile Roman texts that speculated on his fate, in the reliefs Valerian is not humiliated, and he keeps his insignia of office.⁵⁰

Šāpūr I disseminated the image of his victory over Valerian through less monumental, yet no less brilliant facets of Sasanian visual culture.⁵¹ Exhibiting a remarkable fusion of Roman and Sasanian artistic features, a gem now in Paris depicts an equestrian battle between Šāpūr I and Valerian (see fig. 7).⁵² The medium and execution come from the Roman cultural milieu, while the basic idea and composition that the gem presents, the equestrian duel, is deeply Iranian.⁵³ Both sovereigns are mounted, reflecting the long tradition of Middle Iranian “joust scenes” exemplified by Tang-e Sarvāk, Gotarzes II Geopothros’s victory at Bīsotūn, and Ardašīr I’s relief at Fīrūzābād, which also depicts Šāpūr I. The gem renders the armor, dress, and insignia of both sovereigns carefully and faithfully records their battlefield



Figure 7. Victory of Šāpūr I over Valerian ("Paris Cameo"), sardonyx. (Paris BnF, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, inv. 1893.)

dress.⁵⁴ Valerian's *paludamentum*, the preeminent sign of the Roman imperial office in the third century, billows out behind him, as does that of Sasanian kingship from Šāpūr I, the diadem.⁵⁵ Globes rise from the king of kings' shoulders and from the crest of his helmet, signifying his divine *xwarrah*, while another diadem flows from his noblemen's chest harness.⁵⁶ In a notable variation from previous Iranian rock reliefs, the weapon of choice is the sword rather than the lance. The gem renders the specific and contemporary Roman and Sasanian swords that the sovereigns use faithfully and accurately.⁵⁷ Although Valerian brandishes his *gladius*, Šāpūr does not deign even to draw his long Sasanian straight sword. In a convention well-established and recognizable in Šāpūr I's reliefs at Naqš-e Rostam and Bīšāpūr, the king of kings seizes Valerian's wrist, portraying the dramatic moment (real or epically embellished) in which Šāpūr I captures the Roman emperor.

Several mysteries surround this cameo. These include the intended recipient, the function of the gem, and whether other examples were produced. With recourse only to internal evidence, one might infer from its size, semi-precious material, and medium, which was skilled-labor intensive, that it was the product of a master artisan and intended for only a small, privileged



Figure 8. Gold double dinar of Šāpūr I, depicting a submitting Roman emperor on the reverse. Weight: 14.85 g, diameter: 28 mm. (From M. Alram, M. Blet-LeMarquand, and P. O. Skjærvø, "Shapur, King of Iranians and Non-Iranians," in *Des Indo-Grecs aux Sassanides*, ed. R. Gyselen, *Res Orientales* 17 [Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 2007], 11–40. Exact provenance and present location/owner unknown.)

group. It could have been produced solely for the consumption of the king of kings and his family, though, much like Sasanian silver plates, the gem could also have served as a means for propagandistic display to the king's client kings, court, and nobles. Considering the silver plates' role in later diplomatic exchange and overtly hostile relations during the third century, it is indeed possible that the Sasanian court sent this gem to someone within the Roman empire as a not-so-friendly "gift," though a recipient in the Kušān east would be equally likely. Despite the intriguing possibilities that the gem presents, unless new archaeological or textual evidence is unearthed, the gem's original role in Sasanian-Roman relations will have to remain open.

A gold double dinar of Šāpūr I portrays on its reverse yet another small but dazzling compositional rendition of a Roman emperor's submission (see fig. 8).⁵⁸ In contrast to the gem, the image's appearance on a gold coin implies that this image was meant to travel and was directed toward internal and external elites. The mounted king of kings wears his standard mural crown, and, in keeping with representations of the king of kings, his muscular chest is turned toward the viewer, while the rest of the body is in profile. He grasps his sword with his left hand but holds his right up to his face in the standard early Sasanian rendition of this gesture of respect, paralleled on all Ardašīr I and Šāpūr I's reliefs where the king of kings encounters the great god Ohrmazd. In the left field of the coin, a figure with short hair, bare legs, and a billowing cloak turns toward the king of kings, with his back to the viewer but face in profile. Along with the *paludamentum*, his head still retains the remnants of a laurel crown, marking him unequivocally as a Roman emperor. With bent knees and an upturned head, his posture is clearly submissive. It might be possible to interpret this image as an abbreviated version of those on Šāpūr's reliefs that show Philip performing a modified "Roman *proskynēsis*." However, it is more likely that this figure represents Valerian, whose capture is the centerpiece of Šāpūr's propagandistic output, both visual and inscriptional.

ŠĀPŪR I AND THE ROMAN EMPERORS ON A GLOBAL STAGE

Šāpūr I's Roman victories are the sole subject of his relief at Naqš-e Rostam, and this same theme is also the central focus of Bišāpūr I, II, and III, as well as Dārābgird. Having considered the significance of the individual

Roman emperors portrayed, we must widen our scope to examine the relationship of this central scene of Roman victory to the other figures in Šāpūr I's multigure reliefs Bīšāpūr III and II.⁵⁹ These two reliefs deal with roughly the same subsidiary themes: a demonstration of the support of the Sasanian nobles for Šāpūr I and the subjection or obeisance of select sovereigns and peoples from Ērān and Anērān. These much more complex compositions integrate Philip's act of submission with those of the other kings. Within a wider exploration of the theme of sovereignty over Iran and Non-Iran, the relief links the submission of the Romans to additional scenes portraying the subjection of other peoples. Philip the Arab's act of *proskynēsis* overlaps with other figures' supplication or submission before Šāpūr.

The central panels of both Bīšāpūr II and III portray roughly the same scene. In addition to the three Roman emperors, two Iranian grandees enter the scene and offer their obeisance to Šāpūr I (see figs. 9 and 10).⁶⁰ In contrast to Philip's performance of what at this point could be interpreted as "Roman *proskynēsis*," the two Iranians demonstrate their respect and submission with gestures indigenous to the Iranian cultural milieu. In both reliefs, the figure nearest to Šāpūr shows his respect by covering his hands and folding them under his arms a gesture of respect (Mid. Pers. *dast-kaš*).⁶¹ The second figure from the king of kings, who wears headgear in the shape of an animal in both reliefs, is the most important subsidiary figure after the Roman emperors.⁶² In Bīšāpūr II the second figure to the right holds both his hands, palms together, before his face.⁶³ In Bīšāpūr III this same figure instead offers a circular object, most likely a diadem, to Šāpūr as a token of his submission. This diadem, however, is different from the diadem worn by the king of kings or bestowed upon him by Ohrmazd or the flying putto. It does not have the extremely long ties flowing from it, an omission that marks it as the diadem of a lesser king.

As well as combining Šāpūr I's Roman victories and submission with those gained from other sovereigns, Bīšāpūr II and III integrate the king of kings' victories with large groupings of symbolic figures. In doing so, Šāpūr I weaves his Roman victories into a broader vision of his place at the center of a well-ordered global empire. In addition to noting that Bīšāpūr III shows technical and stylistic evidence of Roman execution, G. Herrmann and others have commented on the similarities between aspects of Bīšāpūr III and the Achaemenid "tribute bearer" reliefs from the *apadāna* at Persepolis, including the concept of harmonious order, design, number and size of figures, arrangement into repeating registers, and even the identification of a number of groupings of figures.⁶⁴ These similarities suggest the intriguing possibility that the reliefs were the creation of Roman artisans who had



Figure 9. Detail of central panel of Šāpūr I's rock relief, Bīšāpūr II.
(Photo by author.)

seen and been inspired by Achaemenid art under the direction of the Sasanian king of kings. In both reliefs the king of kings and the submitting or defeated sovereigns occupy the central sections, while mounted figures of the Sasanian nobility and select subject peoples who show their submission and allegiance fill out the side sections. Bīšāpūr II depicts four types of subject peoples (possibly five if the unfinished panel is considered), all of whom wear a variation of Iranian dress.⁶⁵ Bīšāpūr III limits these subject peoples to those who were the most prominent and over whom the sovereign won a military victory: the Romans and Kušāns.⁶⁶ In contrast to their prominence in the central panel, the Romans occupy only the lower two registers, compared to the Kušāns, who occupy the upper three, including the one directly before the king of kings. The Roman and Kušān figures all bear offerings to Šāpūr; however, those of the Kušāns are more elaborately detailed and even include two wild cats led on leashes and an Indian elephant. Both Romans and Kušāns offer Šāpūr I what appear to be their respective ruler's mode of transportation. In the case of the Kušāns (fig. 10), it is a riderless, richly caparisoned horse. The Romans, one of whom holds a *vexillum*, lead a riderless carriage of a type that is recognizable as imperial by comparison with representations on the arch of Galerius and the arch of Constantine (see fig. 11; cf. fig. 15, upper panel).⁶⁷ In both reliefs, however, the



Figure 10. Detail of Šāpūr I's rock relief, Bišāpūr III. (Photo by author.)

mounted figures representing the king's power base, the Sasanian nobility, are prominent, and in Bīšāpūr III they take up more than half the relief. With their inclusion the king of kings demonstrates both his might and his success in subjecting such an array of people.⁶⁸

Bīšāpūr II and III contain another novel element, a winged, nude male figure who flies toward the king of kings, bearing in both hands an untied diadem of the sort that Šāpūr wears about his brow.⁶⁹ This figure acts as a type of divine agent, bearing the sovereign a token of celestial approbation, in a sort of reenactment of Šāpūr I's divine investiture as shown on Bīšāpūr I and Naqš-e Rājāb IV. An infantile male nude performing a serious role such as this had precedents in Greco-Roman visual culture, although such figures were usually confined to a more whimsical domestic genre, often referred to in scholarship as Dionysian or Bacchic art, in which *erotes* enact royal or divine roles.⁷⁰ Yet while the figure could be clearly understood through the conventions of Roman visual culture, as many examples from Iran's Hellenistic and Parthian heritage demonstrate, Roman craftsmen need not have introduced the motif.⁷² In a composition that relates directly to Iranian triumphal rock reliefs, at Bīsotūn Gotarzes II Geopothros receives a diadem marking his equestrian victory from what appears to be a (female?) winged Victory. The Near Eastern, Central and South Asia Hellenism of Parthian, Bactrian, Indo-Greek, and Gandharan art all offer precedents or corroborations. Regardless of its origin, the figure, as well as the act that it performs and the diadem itself, functions as a mediating symbol that communicates a simple idea clearly in an idiom understandable not only in the context of the visual cultures of the Romans and Sasanians, but also in that of the Kušāns—thus from the Mediterranean to Central and South Asia.⁷²

THE PALACE COMPLEX OF BĪŠĀPŪR AND ROMAN ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENT

Šāpūr I engaged with Roman visual and triumphal culture in his use of Roman mosaic and architectural ornament in his palace complex at Bīšāpūr. His palace presents several clear parallels with Roman mosaics, especially with those at Antioch. The technique and ornamental forms of the palace mosaics present clear continuities with Roman material, as do their subjects.⁷³ Mosaics adorn the floors of two of the most prominent spaces in Šāpūr I's palace and depict grapevines, human faces (possibly theater masks), and women dancing, weaving garlands, and playing music in various states of undress.⁷⁴ Geometrical motifs such as braiding, meanders, and faux three-



Figure 11. Detail of Roman imperial carriage, Šāpūr I's rock relief, Bīšāpūr III. (Photo by author.)

dimensional rectangles also incorporate aspects of contemporary ornament from Roman mosaic work.⁷⁵ Although the medium is different, the stucco work in Bīšāpūr's "domed room" parallels traditional Greco-Roman architectural ornamental carving.⁷⁶ Niches separated by pilasters and articulated with an entablature organized the space of the lower portion of the walls of the cruciform quadruple *ayvān*. Geometrical and vegetal motifs such as meander and acanthus articulated the architrave and frieze, respectively. The motifs do not represent a direct translation, however. The craftsmen who transferred these classical ornamental motifs into stucco applied them according to Sasanian stuccowork's tendency toward *horror vacui* and covered several surfaces that would normally not have carried such ornamentation in traditional Roman structures. Consonant with mainstream Roman architectural forms, a monument erected in Bīšāpūr to honor Šāpūr I consisted of two Corinthian columns that originally supported statues of the king of kings and his father.⁷⁷ For whatever motive, the monument's patron, an Iranian, valued and chose this order as being especially suited to carry the royal images.

Scholars have offered various interpretations of Šāpūr I's choice of ornamental and figural elements in Bīšāpūr. H. von Gall understood the themes of the mosaics as attributes of Dionysus. Based on Dionysus's triumphal symbolism in Greco-Roman culture and the use of Dionysian imagery by

Alexander, the Diadochoi, and Roman emperors, he saw in the imagery of the mosaics a triumphal statement and argued for a coherency of the Iranian interpretation with this Roman interpretation besides correspondences in technique and imagery.⁷⁸ Although such parallels are tantalizing, in contrast to the abundant Roman iconographical elements in Šāpūr I's reliefs, no Sasanian textual evidence exists to corroborate our interpretation of the appropriated mosaic imagery. Dionysian elements constituted one of the most widespread types of classical motifs in Sasanian art, and as a result of Parthian and Bactrian Hellenism, Iran likely had a rich store of both indigenous interpretations and material, and need not have depended on the Romans to supply the Dionysian interpretation.⁷⁹ However, the extent to which the king of kings and his court both cultivated and applied such "classical culture" is debatable, as is whether the mosaics actually represent Dionysian themes. Details such as the women, garlands, and musical instruments have an equally well-established place in Iranian visual culture and appear in many courtly scenes and in a variety of media.⁸⁰

Although whether Šāpūr himself saw the imagery as Dionysian remains an intriguing but unanswerable question, we can say with certainty that Bīšāpūr's Roman mosaic works and architectural ornament were a testament to the king of kings' victories and constituted war booty like the Roman engineering works. Beyond this, Šāpūr I's appropriation of classical material engaged the political and symbolic significance of an "international ornament," presaging developments in the sixth and seventh centuries.⁸¹ Rather than simple eclecticism, the ornamental material was a carefully crafted and staged expression of the king of kings' developing understanding of Sasanian kingship. When Šāpūr I applied Roman ornamental motifs to his palatial-sacral complexes, it enabled him to situate himself within a cross-continental aristocratic common culture of Hellenistic visual culture that Parthians, Kušāns, and, obviously, the Romans all cultivated. These motifs commented on Šāpūr I's identity as a sovereign, portraying him as a ruler who controlled a particular Eurasian mark of distinction and expression of an aristocratic common culture; they demonstrated that his tastes as well as his rule dominated and incorporated the best of all peoples. The classical and classicizing ornament formed just one aspect of Bīšāpūr's visual culture and stood side by side with other ornamental and visual statements of Šāpūr I's aristocratic identity and autocratic power, such as the bull-headed capitals appropriated from the Achaemenid royal and architectural heritage, and traditional Iranian stuccowork of the sort that Šāpūr I's Parthian predecessors incorporated into their palaces.⁸² The careful juxta-

position of all these different visual and architectural traditions was ultimately a statement in itself.

Šāpūr I's reliefs and architectural material present a compelling case for early Roman-Sasanian artistic and cultural interaction. Most scholars agree that there was some level of technical and formal influence, with Roman artisans working on Bīšāpūr III at least. The large-scale deportations of Roman civilians and soldiers during Šāpūr I's reign created the means for such transfer of labor and ideas. Beyond formal considerations, Sasanian triumphal art incorporated many Roman triumphal concepts. The integration of Roman cultural material in Sasanian art was not arbitrary or aimless; rather, it was carried out for the express purpose of defining the Sasanian and Roman sovereigns' identities in relation to each other, as conceived by Šāpūr I, and of communicating a challenge from one culture to the other. Šāpūr I's reliefs portray a level of interaction at a certain point in time that was made possible by a particular set of circumstances, the interest of a single sovereign and the power balance between the Roman and Sasanian empires.

The events of the mid-third century established a precedent for later exchanges and increased the two cultures' familiarity with each other's triumphal material (especially the Sasanians' acquaintance with the Roman motifs); events of the period even transferred various ideas and images from one cultural milieu to the other. Though it established precedents, Šāpūr's reign did not predetermine later interactions. The two empires' subsequent agonistic exchange evolved in new directions in accordance with later concerns, circumstances, and events. In fact, explicit portrayals of triumph over Roman emperors did not figure prominently in the productions of most of Šāpūr I's successors.⁸³

5 Rome's Troubled Third Century and the Emergence of a New Equilibrium

After Severus Alexander's murder, Rome's relationship with the Sasanians scarcely figured in the imagery and ideology of his successors, who were largely preoccupied with holding the northern *limes*. Rome's immediate ideological and propagandistic response to Šāpūr's success and claims was as weak as its military response. After his "submission" to Šāpūr I, Philip mustered only the feeble coin legend *PAX FUNDATA CUM PERSIS* to hide the shady dealings around his accession after Gordian III's death on campaign; it was certainly no answer to the powerful images and statements that Šāpūr I disseminated throughout the Mediterranean and South Asia.¹

A substantial response from Rome came only under Gallienus, Valerian's son. As sole emperor after Šāpūr I captured Valerian, Gallienus faced a crisis of authority and legitimacy both personal and imperial.² Although emperors had met their deaths on the battlefield (including possibly Gordian III against Šāpūr), none had ever been captured and enslaved by a foreign power expressing universal claims commensurate with those of Rome, as well as the means to implement them.³ Šāpūr I's capture of Valerian represented a new factor in the legitimacy equation and a conundrum in a system of rule in which legitimacy and divine sanction were established through victory.⁴ Not surprisingly, Valerian's defeat and capture, combined with the incessant pressure of nomadic incursions, set off wave upon wave of revolts, only some of which Gallienus's murderer and successor, Claudius II (268–270), would finally put down, while others would persist even until the reign of Claudius II's successor, Aurelian (270–275).⁵ Incessant warfare marked every year of Gallienus's reign, save only a brief period in 265–266.⁶

IMAGINARY PERSIANS, UNCELEBRATED VICTORIES

When one considers the internal and external turmoil of Gallienus's time in power—according to some, the darkest point in Roman history—it's easy to forget that his reign was one of the longest of the third century and one of the few that included a decennial celebration.⁷ Although Gallienus's reign is poorly documented, it yields some clues to Rome's initial response to Šāpūr I's successes and statements.⁸ While Gallienus was successful in many battles on the northern limes, he never attempted to revenge his father or recoup Roman pride in a campaign against the Sasanians.⁹ In order to survive, Gallienus completely disavowed any connection with the defeated Augustus, bringing about for all practical purposes a sort of *damnatio memoriae* against his father.¹⁰

Without the support of the senate, and ultimately unable to truly trust the army or to rely on the dynastic principle because of Valerian's misfortune and his own disavowal, Gallienus sought to bolster his personal power by constructing a special connection with the divine realm and fostering a sense of personal charisma. Although he directed these statements largely at an internal audience, they reflect the destabilizing menace of inspired and ever victorious Sasanian kingship. Gallienus's efforts were not part of a pre-planned campaign; rather, they were flexible, experimental, and eclectic developments that drew on several precedents and models. Whereas Valerian had been relatively conventional in his approach to imperial representation, Gallienus adopted characteristics of a veritable pantheon of gods, male and female, as well as those of deified semi-mythological rulers. Either out of pragmatism or for propaganda purposes, Gallienus departed from, or radically altered, many of Valerian's military, political, and religious policies in an attempt both to strengthen his own position and to elevate the position of the emperor.¹¹ In addition to such innovations, Gallienus showed a renewed interest in tapping into the ancient traditions of Rome.¹²

In the troubled, war-torn period after Valerian's capture, Gallienus's mints issued type after type with such legends as *PAX, FELICITAS AETERNA, UBIQUE PAX, SECURITAS PERPETUA*, and *PAX AETERNA*. The volume of these issues peaked between 265 and 266, when the empire actually enjoyed a provisional period of peace before falling back into chaos in 267/8.¹³ At the same time Gallienus began a subtle campaign of *imitatio Augusti*, appropriating Augustan numismatic and visual features.¹⁴ In two issues with the legends *FELICIT[atis] AUG[usti]* and *DEO AUGUSTI* he deliberately revived incised lettering, which had not been seen since Augustus, and adopted aspects of Augustus's physiognomy.¹⁵ In keeping with the eclectic divinizing tenden-

cies of his coin types, Gallienus also adopted characteristics of Alexander the Great, such as the full, "manelike" hair and the upturned gaze.¹⁶ Beyond their appeal as paradigms of inspired rulership, both Augustus and Alexander had obvious significance in Rome as rulers who had battled an Eastern menace.

Despite his gestures toward Roman tradition, Gallienus focused on developing a charismatic, divinely inspired, even transcendent kingship. After the capture of Valerian, the theme of divine investiture and election re-emerges *en force* in Gallienus's coinage, after an absence of more than two generations.¹⁷ Gallienus claimed an unprecedented number of deities as his *conservatores* or *comites*, including Juppiter, Hercules, Mars, Juno, Apollo, Diana, Aesculapius, Neptune, Sol, Mercury, and Liber Pater. His divine connections cover a wide variety of realms and reflect many constituencies.¹⁸ Complementing an increase in the imagery of generalized divine sanction or protection, divine election became a prominent and permanent aspect of Roman imperial ideology and iconography, enduring until the end of the Roman empire, fluctuations in divinities notwithstanding.¹⁹ In other coins that also appear during the years of his sole reign, Gallienus reinvigorated the tradition of assimilating the emperor to select deities.

Popular with emperors from Caligula to Nero to Commodus, divine assimilation had a long, turbulent history. What is unique about Gallienus's appropriation of this strategy is again the sheer volume and idiosyncratic choice of deities.²⁰ He appeared with Hercules' lion skin on coins issued in 261–262 and again in 265, with Mercury's caduceus and the legend *DEO MERCURIO AUGUSTO* on a medallion dated 264, as the *GENIUS POPULI ROMANI* on coins struck between 265 and 266, and as Zeus on a medallion from 267/8.²¹ During the later part of Gallienus's reign (ca. 267), however, Sol Invictus, of all these deities, begins to take the most important place in the emperor's pantheon, perhaps because of the Sasanian threat.²² Gallienus was the first emperor since Elagabalus to address Sol directly in coin legends, which included *SOLI CONS[ervatori] AUG[ugusti]* and, for the first time, *SOLI COM[iti] AUG[usti]* and *SOLI INVICTO*.²³ On the reverse of such coins Sol appears with a rayed crown, his right arm raised, and the left holding a globe. On some coins Gallienus even appears in the place of Sol, in the same posture and with the same attributes.²⁴

Gallienus's massive program of divine legitimation responded to the challenge presented by Ardašīr I and Šāpūr I's statements of inspired kingship, which threatened to do as much damage to Rome's mystique and prestige on the third-century world stage as Sasanian victories on the battlefield had done to Rome's military reputation. At this point, we do not see Rome re-

sponding to Sasanian propaganda as directly as we will several decades later. Nevertheless, it is clear that Gallienus overhauled the Roman imperial image in direct reaction to Sasanian pressure, greatly intensifying the process of reaction and counterreaction, which would ultimately lead to more intense engagements with Sasanian ideological material.

PALMYRA—BETWEEN ROME AND IRAN

Palmyra played a special role in the late third century as a mediating point between Rome and Persia—a role, however, that ultimately led to Palmyra's destruction. The military history of these events has received a great deal of attention; however, the shifting symbolic role of Palmyra in Rome and Persia's struggles has not. Palmyra first acted as Rome's victorious proxy against the Sasanians and then as a symbolic replacement for the Persian empire. Šāpūr I's seemingly unstoppable western advances ceased in the mid- to late 260s, when Odaenath of Palmyra drove a Sasanian division back from Emessa, possibly destroying it.²⁵ Despite the fact that the Palmyrene ruler operated virtually independently, Gallienus sought to claim and capitalize on Odaenath's achievement, having no military victory against the Sasanians of his own, or prospects for securing one.²⁶ The *Historia Augusta* offers a splendidly detailed description of Gallienus's triumphal procession. Unfortunately it is no more than a medley of stock features compiled from numerous other processions, filled with late fourth-century anachronisms, and warped by the author's vendetta against the emperor.²⁷ Yet it just might contain a kernel of truth.²⁸ The SHA describes a staged triumph in which many *gentes simulatae*—performers dressed up to represent conquered peoples, including "Persians"—marched to embellish and fill out the spectacle.²⁹ It is possible, given his numismatic exertions to proclaim his military virtue, that Gallienus held a triumph for himself in 264 in conjunction with Odenathus's victory over the Sasanians in order to cover up his actual helplessness in the eastern part of the empire, which was essentially independent at this point.³⁰ Indeed, during the same period, Gallienus's titulature begins to include *PERSICUS MAX[imus]* or *PARTH[icus] MAX[imus]*, and his coins include legends like *SPQR* and the image of an eagle on the back of lion, which L. de Blois interpreted as claiming the Palmyrene success for Rome.³¹

Under the emperor Aurelian (270–275), Palmyra again acted as a mediating point for Rome's ideological understanding of itself in relation to the Sasanian empire. Aurelian did not claim Palmyra's victories for himself as Gallienus did, but took things one step further. In his campaign to put down

Palmyra's short-lived, independent empire, Aurelian constructed Palmyra as an ersatz Persia—one that was more manageable and conquerable. In 272, Aurelian mounted a campaign against Odaenathus's queen and successor, Zenobia (267–272), who had taken advantage of Rome's weakness following Claudian's murder to declare Palmyra independent.³² By 273, Aurelian had destroyed Palmyra and led Zenobia in triumph through Rome.³³ Although his campaign against Palmyra resembled that directed against the Gallic usurper Tetricus (274), insofar as it restored the unity of the empire, Aurelian used it as an opportunity to insinuate victory over the Sasanians. Inscriptions attest that he took the titles *Parthicus* and *Persicus Maximus* to celebrate this victory.³⁴ This clearly was not the result of the filter of an archaizing imperial titulature, nor does it represent ethnographic confusion. *Palmyrenicus Maximus* also appears, but only once, suggesting that Aurelian preferred the more grandiloquent and ideologically useful, yet less precise *Persicus*.³⁵

In contrast to the "victories" of Gallienus and Aurelian, other than a few inscriptions attesting to his titles *Parthicus* and *Persicus Maximus*, Carus's successful invasion of the Sasanian empire, even to the gates of Ctesiphon, ironically went completely uncelebrated.³⁶ Only with the Tetrarchy, which marked the resurgence of Roman military fortune and the expansion of Roman sacral ideology, would the Persians begin to play a role in Rome's visual culture of triumph that was at all commensurate with that of Šāpūr I.

THE TETRARCHIC RESURGENCE: COMPETING IMAGES OF SACRAL KINGSHIP IN THE ARCH OF GALERIUS

After Carus's death, his successor, Numerianus (283–284), withdrew from Sasanian territory without a treaty.³⁷ Relations between the Romans and the Sasanians remained in a latent state of war for several years, until 288, when Diocletian and Bahrām II agreed to a peace treaty in order to free both to turn their attention to more pressing internal problems.³⁸ Both sides respected the agreement of 288 as long as their full attention was directed elsewhere, though soon Diocletian set about reorganizing the eastern defenses and strengthening Rome's position in its portion of Armenia, both of which actions were perceived by the Sasanians with fear as aggressive moves.³⁹ Diocletian appears to have taken the title *Persicus Maximus* in 290 from these dealings. In official propaganda he certainly capitalized on the revolt of Bahrām II's brother and the king of kings' subsequent request for peace.⁴⁰

In a marked change from the previous sixty years of militaristic and expansionist Sasanian foreign policy, Bahrām II showed few aggressive tendencies, preoccupied as he was with internal difficulties. Things changed, however, when Narseh came to the Sasanian throne through a coup and soon sought to match and counter Rome's belligerent preparations.⁴¹ Although Narseh's Paikuli inscription claims that "the Caesar (*Kēsar*), and the Romans stood in supplication (*lāb-gārih*), peace and friendship towards us," in 296 Narseh invaded Roman Armenia.⁴² Armenia was ruled by Trdat, who was not only a Roman puppet, but in Sasanian eyes the last vestige of the Arsacid dynasty of Iran, and enemy of the royal family.⁴³ Sent by Diocletian to counter Narseh, the Caesar Galerius (r. 293–311) initially met a severe defeat.⁴⁴ Enraged, Diocletian sent him back again, and this time Galerius achieved a truly spectacular victory.⁴⁵ In the battle of Satala (298) in Armenia, Galerius not only routed the Sasanian army but captured Narseh's wives and children along with members of his court and much booty.⁴⁶ This decisive defeat gave Narseh little room to negotiate and forced him to accept the peace treaty of Nisibis in 298, which resulted in a loss of influence over Armenia as well as a loss of territory, pushing the boundary of the Sasanian empire back to the Tigris River.⁴⁷

Galerius's victory over Narseh was a resounding success for the Romans, and not surprisingly he celebrated it in several monuments incorporated into the urban and palatial fabric of his capital, Thessaloniki.⁴⁸ Completed around 303, Galerius's palace was part of an extraordinarily productive imperial building program sponsored by the Tetrarchy, on a scale that the Roman empire had not seen for almost a century.⁴⁹ With the multiplication of courts under the Tetrarchy, imperial residences were a focus of this burst of construction. Thus Galerius's palace has many elements in common with other late antique, and especially Tetrarchic, palaces, including a nearby hippodrome, a mausoleum, peristyle courtyards, and an audience hall, as well as living quarters.⁵⁰

Rather than focusing on the symbolically charged cityscape of Rome, Galerius created a new symbolically rich environment, a "Rome away from Rome," from the ground up. From the surviving material we can conclude Galerius adapted various elements of architecture of power to foreground his Persian victory, visually incorporating it into several of the palace's most prominent architectural and ritual environments. The so-called arch of Galerius, originally a tetrapylon entranceway to his palace, is the most important architectural element and is the only surviving statement of Roman victory over the Sasanians that is equal in stature to Šāpūr I's rock reliefs (see fig. 12). The structure deserves special attention for this reason

as well as because it reflects the Tetrarchic expansion of Roman sacral kingship in the face of challenges posed by the Sasanians.

The arch was ingeniously sited astride the *via Egnatia* and at the entrance to the sacred palatial precincts. Its present remains were originally the western piers of a domed tetrapylon that united several functions in one structure.⁵¹ The structure dominated the *via Egnatia*, the Balkans' main east-west highway, and Thessaloniki's *decumanus maximus*, which passed under the city's main eastern and western arches. While in this capacity it emulated the effect of a triumphal arch, proclaiming its message to all who traveled the main urban and regional artery in Galerius's part of the empire, its primary function was to mark and control the entrances to the sacred precincts of the palace. Through the northern gate of the structure lay the entrance to a long, column-lined corridor that led to the emperor's mausoleum, the present-day church of St. George. Its south entrance was the most important gate, as it led not only to the main palatial precincts, accessible only to a chosen few, but, for late antique Thessaloniki's people, to the imperial presence at the hippodrome.⁵² Like a true triumphal arch, it served as a monumental celebration of the emperor's deeds; however, it also fulfilled its function as a monumental entranceway, serving as the emperor's architectural and visual representative in the city. Thus the structure was closer in function to later developments in Roman urbanism, like the Chalke Gate in imperial Constantinople, than to the triumphal arch of Septimius Severus or Constantine in Rome.⁵³

The arch of Galerius's extensive marble relief sculpture celebrated the Caesar's victory over the Sasanians while integrating the newly formed Tetrarchic ideals of divine co-rulership.⁵⁴ Of the tetrapylon's four main piers, only the northwest and southwest piers survive, though with many sections damaged. Nevertheless, the structure's extant relief work can still provide a rough idea of its overall sculptural program.⁵⁵ The reliefs on the piers' three main faces are organized into four vertical registers, separated from each other by ornamental bands of wreaths or foliage. Only the bottom register continues around all four faces of the pier, under low pendant arches that once connected the tetrapylon to the structures that led to the palace on the south and to the rotunda to the north. A number of studies have clarified the narrative position and symbolic meaning of the panels, as far their fragmentary state will allow.⁵⁶ Difficulties in identifying certain panels aside, scenes from Galerius's campaign against the Sasanians are present on all the main sides of the structure and clearly dominate its overall effect. The history of the campaign and its aftermath likely began on the destroyed piers, and we meet it in full progress on the east and south faces of the north pier.



Figure 12. Arch of Galerius (r. as Caesar 293–205, Augustus 305–311), Thessaloniki, Greece; completed ca. 303. Surviving western piers of a domed tetrapylon, originally astride the Via Egnatia. View of the east face, originally inside the tetrapylon. Width of arch: 9.7 m. (Photo by author.)

From there the narrative moves to the piers' western faces and concludes on the south pier's east face, notably skipping the north face of the south pier, which flanked the gate of the palace.

The narrative generally proceeds from top to bottom on all faces of the piers' upper three panels. However, even accounting for missing components, the relief program does not follow a simple narrative with all panels participating; rather it shifts between historical and symbolic modes of expression.⁵⁷ The panels on the bottom register do not directly participate in the sequential narrative of Galerius's campaign at all but form their own unit, which relates to spectatorial and perhaps ritual movement around the structure itself. The division between the various panels' historical-narrative and symbolic modes of expression is not strict, however, especially considering the imperial image's growing iconic transcendence during the Tetrarchy.⁵⁸ In some cases certain panels served both purposes, depending on the viewer's perspective and activity.

The content and arrangement of the relief sculpture are highly sensitive to the panels' relationship with the *via Egnatia* and the palace and reflect

the structure's dual functions and multiple spectatorial perspectives.⁵⁹ Although the narrative appears to progress through the top three panels of most piers in a largely uninterrupted sequence, the designer of the arch arranged the campaign cycle so that certain key scenes would coincide with, and complement, the most important views of the structure as dictated by its urban situation and dual functions as gate and arch. The relief sculpture on the western side of the two piers was originally on the exterior of the structure and adorned the face that met viewers traveling east on the *decumanus* toward the city's eastern gate. On this face, the designer of the arch chose to foreground images and ritual acts that had become subjects of competition between the two realms, with Šāpūr I's productions as notable precedents. On this side of the structure, which represented the emperor architecturally to the city and empire, images of enthroned Roman emperors lording over the Sasanian king of kings or his representatives predominate to an extent unmatched in any pre-Sasanian Roman triumphal arch.⁶⁰

The surviving sculptural material on the western face presents three panels showing a Roman emperor seated on a *sella castrensis* receiving figures in suppliant and subject positions characteristic of the Sasanian empire (figs. 13 and 14). Clues on one of the damaged panels suggest that in its original state the west face possibly depicted four such scenes. The top panel of the north pier (the upper left for a viewer approaching the structure from the west on the *decumanus*) contains an image of an emperor, recognizable by his large size, receiving a Persian, either an envoy or the Sasanian king of kings himself, who shows his subjection and begs for the lives of the royal family, who stand nearby (fig. 13).⁶¹ The emperor wears armor, the *paludamentum* cast over his left shoulder, and *campagi* ("military boots") and is surrounded by his German bodyguard, who are identifiable by their hairstyle.⁶² Though the figure of the emperor is now destroyed, he likely held his right arm up to his chest, possibly grasping a scepter, as in other scenes, or in a gesture of address, while drawing his left arm across his lap. A figure in Iranian dress, possibly Narseh, approaches the Roman emperor in fearful deference, with his body inclined, knees bent, and arms outstretched.⁶³ Though the relief is abraded, one can make out that the figure has covered his outstretched hands in his cloak in accordance with Roman court protocol.⁶⁴ H. P. Laubscher saw in the destroyed mass under him a child, representing one the king of kings' family members offered as a hostage to the Romans.⁶⁵ The figure advances toward the Roman emperor and is about to perform *proskynēsis*, much like the figure of Parthmaspates on Trajan's *sestertius* or, more to the point, the figure of Philip the Arab in Šāpūr I's relief

at Naqš-e Rostam. Farther back, in front of the continuing line of the emperor's bodyguard, another Persian approaches, with body inclined, but not to the same degree as the first figure. To the far right, figures of another child and four women in long robes with veils flowing down from their high tiaras, reminiscent of third-century Palmyrene or Hatran fashion, form a semiseparate group and represent Narseh's harem.⁶⁶

The only surviving fragment of the middle panel suggests that it originally contained a similar scene, with a Roman emperor receiving two suppliant Persians, which ran in the opposite direction. The lead Persian again covers his hands, and underneath his arms stands a figure of a child, now mostly destroyed. In the background, figures of the emperor's bodyguard are interspersed with other Persians facing toward the emperor. Laubscher accounted for the seeming repetition between the two scenes by suggesting that one depicted Persians entreating Galerius and the other Diocletian, a hypothesis that is consistent with the ruler ideology of the Tetrarchy and its practice of sharing honors, especially victories.⁶⁷ No matter the narrative or ideological purpose of this repetition, visually it allowed the designer of the arch to present an additional scene of subject Persians on the exterior of the structure.⁶⁸ The lower panel depicts women wearing high tiaras and veils and holding cornucopias and scepters who are generally understood as personifications of Sasanian cities.⁶⁹ The head of a German bodyguard on the right indicates that an emperor may have been nearby to receive these figures, quite possibly again enthroned, as in the panels above. If this was the case, the left side of the western face of the structure would have depicted three panels in a row showing an enthroned emperor with figures in Sasanian dress entreating him, and perhaps representing the cities or territories Narseh relinquished in return for his family.⁷⁰ The relief's shift to a symbolic mode is noticeable and deliberately juxtaposes Narseh receiving his wives from the emperor and the Roman emperor taking back his rightful provincial possessions—both represented by women in "Eastern" dress.

To the viewer's top right on the south pier, an enthroned emperor, here most likely Galerius, receives an elephant-drawn quadriga. This image continues the visual sequence and reinforces the impact of multiple images of enthroned emperors receiving Sasanian representatives. Galerius sits on an indeterminate type of throne and wears his official costume (as opposed to armor), which consists of the *paludamentum*, a tunic, trousers (*bracae*), and *campagi*.⁷¹ He holds a long scepter or spear in his left hand and probably had a globe or Victory in his right, though that part of the relief is now abraded. A winged Victory crowns the emperor as an armed female figure



Figure 13. Arch of Galerius, west face, north pier, top three panels, bottom panel destroyed. (Photo by author.)

leads an elephant-drawn quadriga toward him.⁷² The chariot is riderless, possibly prepared for the emperor for a *pompa triumphalis*. In general the symbolism of the scene shows Galerius to be *victor Orientis*. Because of the visual parallel it sets up with the scenes of the Persian suppliants, it offers a sort of metaphysical commentary on events on the left. Below this scene lies

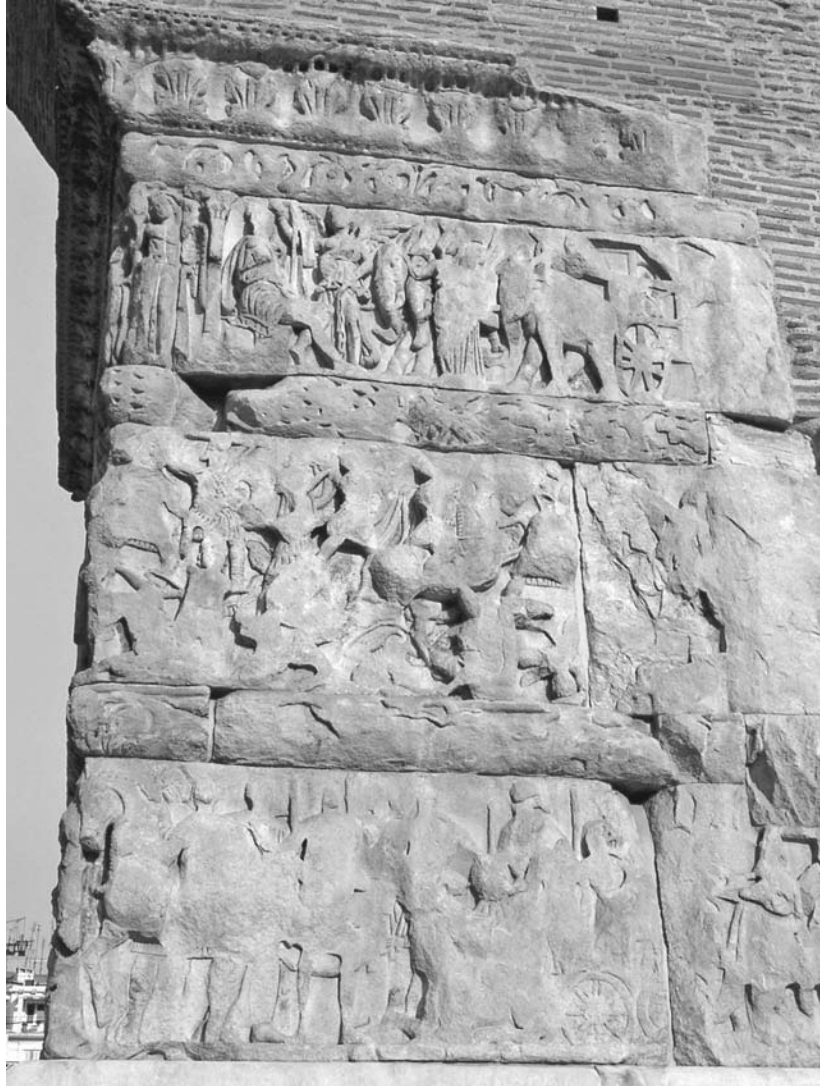


Figure 14. Arch of Galerius, west face, south pier, top three panels.
(Photo by author.)

a highly abraded panel about whose narrative place there is no consensus. The panel depicts what appears to be a symbolic scene, adding to the west face's overall theme of imperial dominance over Sasanian Iran. The scene included a ritual trampling of the enemy, which was common in third- and fourth-century numismatic types linked with the legend *VIRTUS AUGUSTI*.⁷³ Below the trampling scene, Roman soldiers accompany a *pompa triumphalis* and keep watch on Persian prisoners (men, women, and children), some of whom bear offerings.⁷⁴

While these scenes participate in the pictorial account of Galerius's campaign against the Persians, they were specially chosen to face the exterior in order to forcefully proclaim Galerius's, and thus Rome's, dominance over the Sasanian king of kings to the inhabitants of the city and whomever might pass through it. Conversationally, the reliefs spoke to the Sasanians' previous visual and textual claims and were intended to put them in their place. To judge from their multiple appearances, the Sasanian sovereign or his envoys and acts of obeisance are the most important images on the western face, with demonstrations of Galerius's ownership and mastery of Narseh's family and people as a close second. From a comparative standpoint, the western face of the arch shapes the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns' relationship in much the same way that Šāpūr I's reliefs did. The western face converts the sovereign's historical battlefield achievements into a statement of his timeless and universal dominance and majesty.

Having encountered a barrage of images on the exterior of the structure that proclaim the Roman emperor's dominance over the Sasanians, the viewer would enter the tetrapylon to find one of two different modes of expression, depending on which way he turned. To the viewer's left, the faces of the northern pier carried the history of the campaign and its aftermath, as did the eastern face of the south pier. However, if the viewer turned right to access the palace or attend the hippodrome games, he met a face dominated largely by scenes that celebrated the emperors' divine or victorious nature (see fig. 15). In contrast to the other faces, whose panels are predominantly historical with symbolic scenes complementing the narrative, the panels on the northern face of the south pier reverse these modes. This face continued the outer faces' polemic but in a different manner, casting it into dialogue with Tetrarchic cosmocratic ideology.

The second panel from the bottom on the south face was situated so that it met the viewer's slightly upturned gaze as he turned toward the palace entrance.⁷⁵ While the most of the structure celebrated Galerius's accomplishments, this panel, symmetrical and iconic in form, integrates him—and his victory over the Sasanians—into the Tetrarchic system. The panel clearly



Figure 15. Arch of Galerius, south pier, north face. (Photo by author.)

articulates the divine claims of Tetrarchic imperial ideology and depicts the living *Augusti* as apotheosized *kosmokratōres*, whose command is “not confined by the earthly boundaries but reaches the heavens.”⁷⁶ Diocletian and Maximian, left and right, respectively, are enthroned on personifications of *Caelus/Ouranos* (heaven) and *Orbis Terrarum/Oikumenē* (the inhabited earth). The Caesars, Constantius Chlorus and Galerius, stand at their side,

while deities and other personifications attend them all.⁷⁷ At the Caesars' feet kneel two female personifications with mural crowns, referring to the Caesars' victories in Britain and Armenia, which restored lost provinces to the empire. Although the entire structure celebrated Galerius, this panel showed that his victory participated in the larger phenomena of the Tetrarchy's ideals of good governance, harmony, and divine rulership—a comment both on the source of his power and on his own divine nature as one of these inspired rulers.

Lifting his eyes from the enthronement scene, the viewer would then behold a remarkable scene of man-on-man equestrian combat, without precedent or successor, in Roman imperial visual culture (see fig. 16).⁷⁸ In the center of the panel a mounted Roman charges through the melee to meet a Sasanian horseman in single combat. Superimposed on the ornamental band overhead, an eagle holding a wreath swoops down to crown the Roman, marking him out as the emperor, sacred and ever victorious. The emperor is in the thick of battle, and his rearing horse tramples several Persian soldiers. Narseh's horse rears up too but in wild fear. Both horses are richly caparisoned, and Narseh's bears the outline of an animal-skin saddle blanket. Narseh's dress differs from his foot soldiers and includes a wide belt as well what appears to be a Romanized rendition of Sasanian armor similar to the type that Šāpūr I wears in the "Paris cameo." Though damaged, the split mass of stone above his head suggests that his headgear was prominent and could have depicted the *korymbos* of the Sasanian crown or a large "Phrygian" cap. Narseh is not a cowardly adversary and faces the emperor's charge head-on; however, the relief depicts him at the moment of being unhorsed, hit under his left arm by the emperor's lance, the spearhead of which he clutches in his right fist. To the left of the central scene, a figure in Roman armor wades through the sea of battle, striking down cowering Persians. To the right, another massive figure in Roman armor tramples the neck of a prostrate and defeated Persian. Insignia on their shields suggest that these figures represent the two legions that took part in the decisive battle.⁷⁹ Besides balancing the composition and acknowledging Galerius's soldiers, these figures, especially the one on the right, presented another opportunity to demonstrate Roman dominance over Iran, counterbalancing Narseh's relatively courageous appearance in the duel with a *calcatio* that confirms his army's utter defeat and humiliation.

This scene not only suggests familiarity with Sasanian visual culture but specifically engages and challenges a number of the Sasanians' triumphal assertions, most notably Šāpūr I's cameo, which portrays his equestrian combat and victory over Valerian.⁸⁰ Such a royal duel never occurred during the



Figure 16. Detail of equestrian combat, portraying Galerius (*left*) and Narseh (*right*). Arch of Galerius, south pier, north face. (Photo by author.)

campaign, but here it stands as an symbolic expression of Galerius's *virtus*, bravery, and mastery over the Sasanian king of kings. Simply put, the relief panel appropriated the basic idea of celebrating victory with an equestrian duel from Sasanian visual culture, refashioned it, and then redeployed it. In this scene the Sasanian king of kings becomes an attribute of the emperor and comments on the emperor's nature and accomplishments, playing a role that is analogous to that of the Roman emperors in Šāpūr I's expressions. The flanking scene of the Roman trampling the Sasanian, however, suggests a challenge to, not an appropriation of Sasanian, expressions. The basic idea of the scene is prominent in Roman visual culture, yet its close proximity to the previous equestrian battle suggests that it engaged the many Sasanian scenes of Gordian III defeated and trampled under Šāpūr I's relief, forming a counterstatement using a Roman gesture.

The relief proclaims the emperor to be *semper victor*, and the Jovian eagle that crowns him indicates that his victory is divinely ordained. The eagle had an added significance in the Iranian cultural sphere and could symbolize a sovereign's divine royal glory (*xwarrah*).⁸¹ It is unlikely that this im-

age intended to convey that Galerius claimed and rightfully possessed the *Airriianəm x^varənō* "that belongs to the Aryan nations born and unborn."⁸² However, the eagle, as well as the crown or diadem that it bestows, could have functioned as a cross-cultural mediator and granter of legitimacy, victory, and divine sanction, much as the winged putto or the diadem bestowed by Ohrmazd on Šāpūr I's reliefs at Bīšāpūr did. The numerous instances of winged Victories crowning the emperor also mirrored this purpose, but the uniqueness of the eagle and its appearance in close visual connection with the defeated Sasanian sovereign suggest that it was specifically engineered for this purpose.

As mentioned above, the bottom panels of the originally interior faces form a unit apart from the larger narrative and symbolic scenes and relate in a general way to ritual movement into the structure and into the palace, rather than to the larger narrative. To the right as the viewer would enter from the west, a series of seven winged Victories framed by conch shells accompany the viewer as he moved toward the palace. Having turned toward the palace gate, the viewer would see on his right a parade of figures in Sasanian dress, bearing gifts and accompanied by exotic animals, who exit an arched gateway and proceed in the direction of the actual palace gate (see fig. 17). This is the only relief that survives intact in this register, but from K. F. Kinch's observations in the nineteenth century and from clues in photos from the 1930s, when the structure was in a better state of preservation, it can be concluded that the southern, eastern, and western faces of the northern pier contained panels with animals and accompanying figures as well.⁸³ The surviving panel depicts a large throng of figures in Iranian dress and of various ages and sizes.⁸⁴ Each holds out an object in the direction of the palace gate; the object is usually a vase, though in one case it is a textile.⁸⁵ Three elephants ridden by mahouts and one large feline accompany this parade toward the palace. The citizens of late antique Thessaloniki likely witnessed a spectacle similar to the scene in this panel, though whether it represents a triumphal procession after the campaign or the retinue of a Sasanian embassy bearing diplomatic gifts is a matter of speculation.⁸⁶ The latter is more likely, considering that the figures are not bound or flanked by Roman soldiers. An image of representatives of the Sasanian empire bearing symbolic offerings of the riches of their empire in tribute (*phoros*) to the emperor to acknowledge his sovereignty and gain his goodwill is more significant in a general sense than in reference to a specific event. Every time the emperor received an embassy, or an inhabitant entered the gate for the hippodrome, these images commented on that activity and compared it to this most im-

portant ritual demonstration of the emperor's power: the Sasanian king showing acknowledgment of his tributary status.

Just as the battle of Satala rectified Roman territorial losses and reestablished Rome's military strength, Galerius's arch recouped Rome's loss of visual and propagandistic dominance. After Šāpūr I's victory, Galerius publicized his victory both within and outside his empire, and his productions clearly had an impact on later Sasanian ideology and visual culture. The reliefs before Galerius's palace redrew the two realms' relationship and returned Rome to an offensive position in producing images of legitimacy. In answer to Šāpūr I's multiple rock reliefs depicting Gordian III defeated, Philip subjected, and Valerian captured, Galerius's arch carefully highlights images of Narseh defeated, his family captured, and Sasanian envoys communicating the king of kings' obeisance.

These images, and the activities that went on around them, used the particular to comment on the general. From their placement at the door to the palace and more specifically at the city's access point to the hippodrome, these images of victory and dominance obliquely commented on the generalized celebration of the emperor's victorious nature in the hippodrome games. Conversely, the hippodrome games reenlivened the imagery of past victories with its ritualized demonstration that the emperor was the source and focus of all victory. Any *profectio* or *adventus* embassy or deployment of troops that passed through the tetrapylon reanimated its imagery as well. Even after the dissolution of the Tetrarchy, the structure continued to present an important statement of the two realms' relationship, in a way reminiscent of that made by Šāpūr I's rock reliefs. Several emperors, including Constantine and Theodosius I, reportedly used Galerius's palace as their imperial residence, which implies that foreign embassies continued to visit this site.⁸⁷ Like Šāpūr I's rock reliefs, these originally historically specific images endured for centuries and in commenting on the two realms' relationship in general likely made a greater impact than in commemorating their original, particular victories.

In addition to portraying his status as *Persicus Maximus* on the exterior, or public face, of his palace, Galerius integrated this identity into the fabric of one of the most important spaces in the palatial grounds. The "small arch of Galerius," actually a triumphal arch-shaped wall revetment, originally framed a statue niche that welcomed visitors as they turned toward the entrance to the palace's great octagonal audience hall.⁸⁸ Unfortunately, nothing of the statue it framed survives. On its front face the arch displays two shields, each borne by a figure in Iranian clothing. Traditional imperial iconography would have dictated an Eastern and a Western barbarian cap-



Figure 17. Detail of Persian delegation bringing gifts. Arch of Galerius, south pier, east face, bottom panel. (Photo by author.)

tive, yet here the figures in Iranian clothing refer specifically to Galerius's dominance over the East, and the Sasanians in particular. A portrait of Galerius occupies the right *clipeus*, while the left *clipeus* contains a female figure that originally depicted Galerius's wife Valeria but was reworked into the *Tychē* of the city after Valeria's execution in 314.⁸⁹ Dionysian imagery covers the rest of the arch's surfaces. A relief of a satyr or Pan appears on the left flank of the arch, while a maenad dances on the right. Vines laden with grape clusters wind their way up the underside of the arch out of *kantharoi* to a roundel of Dionysus at the apex. The Dionysian theme had many meanings, and Galerius most likely alluded to more than one of them with this imagery. The Dionysian imagery may have referred to the god's association with the city of Thessaloniki; however, Galerius incorporated similar motifs into an analogous aulic space in his villa at Gamzigrad, which suggests that the imagery was also part of a larger, though not dominant, program of self-promotion that was not exclusively tied to the city of Thessaloniki or the Tetrarchic system.⁹⁰ Although Dionysian ideas fell outside of Tetrarchic ideology, the close connection between Dionysian imagery and visual references to Galerius's Persian victory seems to indicate that the em-

peror shared in the old appellation *Neos Dionysos*.⁹¹ The images on the arch would be accessible to all who traveled by way of the *via Egnatia*, and certainly to any embassy that called at Galerius's court.

Galerius disseminated this imagery in a portable medium much like Šāpūr I's cameo. A bronze medallion struck in 298 at Siscia presents the mounted emperor running down several figures in Iranian clothing under the legend *VICTORIA PERSICA* (see fig. 18).⁹² The medallion also features several elements later highlighted in the arch, demonstrating their importance early on in Galerius's conception of the victory. As in certain scenes on the arch, Galerius rides a rearing horse, holds a spear, and tramples underfoot fallen Persian soldiers, illustrating both the emperor's personal *virtus* and his personal role in the campaign. Before him a woman and child kneel and reach out their arms in supplication, which is a possible allusion to the capture of the harem. In a marked departure from similar Roman triumphal scenes, another male figure in Iranian dress, this time standing, faces the charging emperor with his hands raised in supplication.⁹³ This lone standing figure alluded to Narseh's defeat and request for peace. In addition to promoting the emperor's personal virtue and representing the events and outcome of the campaign, the medallion proclaimed Rome's dominance over the Sasanian empire in a manner that matched and countered previous Sasanian productions and in a medium that could travel.

The arch of Galerius presents a compelling example of cross-cultural interaction between Rome and Iran. As in the case of Šāpūr I's rock reliefs, the prime intention of Galerius's structure was to commemorate the sovereign's achievements and offer, even impose, a vision that showed the world as it was, or rather should be. Like Šāpūr I's expressions, features such as the equestrian duel and scenes of the king of kings' representatives performing *proskynēsis* before him shaped the Roman emperor's relationship to his Sasanian counterpart. These key details formed and communicated the emperor's identity. The structure put forth a competing image of the world that could rival and even surpass the image of the world in which the Sasanians lived and which they likely disseminated beyond their borders. The arch was an important early statement in the long process of the two realms' competitive interaction. The arch incorporated images from traditional Roman triumphal visual culture, modifying them in conformity with Tetrarchic ideology to take advantage of the structure's site and multiple functions. To achieve this, it integrated or foregrounded images and ideas that had acquired special significance in the two realms' interaction or that, in the case of the



Figure 18. Medallion of Galerius, dated to 298. Legend: *VICTORIA PERSICA*. (From H. Cohen, *Description historique des monnaies frappées sous l'Empire romain communément appelées médailles impériales*, 2nd ed. [Paris: Rollin and Feuardent, 1888], no. 204.)

equestrian duel, were specially appropriated from the Sasanians and then strategically remodeled.

The arch deployed several cross-cultural mediators, such as the supernaturally bestowed diadem, the act of *proskynēsis*, winged Victories, and, at this point, the equestrian duel. These elements played a role in articulating kingship in both Roman and Sasanian visual culture and as such were extremely useful in establishing Galerius's identity as a divinely inspired ruler, and Narseh's as his subordinate, in an idiom that had power in both cultures. Although Dionysian imagery had a place in both Galerius's and Šāpūr I's palaces, without further evidence it is not clear that the two sovereigns understood it in the same way. Nevertheless, the imagery used in both palaces relates to the larger phenomenon of ornaments role in distinguishing global aristocratic status, although the Romans themselves might not have been entirely aware of this. Finally, a general comparison of Šāpūr I's rock reliefs and Galerius's arch highlights the contrast between the early Sasanian and late antique Roman modes of royal commemoration and celebration. Whereas the Sasanians inherited and engaged a tradition of Near Eastern memorial intervention in the natural environment, the Romans continued to cultivate spaces and activities of urban environments to celebrate the emperor, even those whose memorial or sacral-symbolic significance was newly manufactured.

6 Contested Images of Sacral Kingship and New Expressions of Triumph

Šāpūr I's rock reliefs and Galerius's palatial structures capitalized on actual victories over specific—even identifiable—sovereigns to craft the royal self-image. After the late third century, in the visual culture of both the Roman and the Sasanian courts, these competitive statements of victory and dominance became more and more abstract and focused increasingly on celebrating the sovereign as victor in a continuous and general sense, paralleling new expressions of divine kingship in both cultures.¹ A new, "fraternal relationship" that emerged between Rome and Iran in the fourth century facilitated a growing familiarity and frequency of contact. The interaction of the two cultures became more of a dialogue achieved through subtle, even "encrypted" images rather than purely belligerent statements.

To approach the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns in this period was to experience something tangibly divine on earth. We have ample record of such expressions by both rulers, yet the sanctity that surrounded them did not exist merely in the realm of words. The Roman emperor, as well as everything associated with his *domus divina*, was considered to be *sacer*.² Christianity only slightly altered the source of the emperor's sacred quality, and, like their predecessors, who followed Rome's traditional religion, the Christian emperors too spoke of their *numen*, while, by extension, anything utilized within their sacred aura became *sacer*, *sacratissimus*, or *divinus*.³ Their orders were composed on *altaria* and referred to as *caeleste oraculum*, any disregard of which was *sacrilegium*.⁴ From at least the Tetrarchy, the Roman emperor carried an institutionalized divine luminescence, which came to be represented in artistic form as a *nimbus*.⁵

Like his Roman "brother," the Sasanian king of kings cultivated an institutional sanctity as well. Up until the fifth century, the Sasanian king's official titulature on coins and inscriptions read: "the Mazdā-worshipping,

divine lord [. . .] who is in the form of the gods.”⁶ Emerging in the mid-fourth century and developing until the end of the empire, Sasanian kingship took an increasingly astral, cosmic character, with the king of kings sharing in the divine quality of the sun, moon, and stars.⁷ The Sasanian king was not one of the gods (*yazadān*), but, like the sun and moon, he was a divine creation of Ohrmazd, essential for the proper functioning of the cosmos, and served an antidemonic role in creation.⁸ Cosmic elements, such as the sun, moon, and stars, predominate on late Sasanian crowns in our numismatic primary sources. In several issues of Kōsrow II three dotted rings corresponding to the three heavens in Zoroastrian cosmology encircle the image of the regnal fire.⁹ From records in Greek, Latin, and Armenian sources, late Sasanian royal titulature expanded to describe the king as “a god manifest among men,” “partner with the stars, brother of the sun and moon,” “the divine, good, father of peace, ancient [. . .] fortunate, pious and beneficent, to whom the gods have given great fortune and a great kingdom, giant of giants, formed in the image of gods.”¹⁰ The Sasanian king’s luminous, divine, royal glory (Av. *x^varənah-*, Mid. Pers. *xwarrah*), which marked him as the legitimate Iranian sovereign, manifested itself visually as a somatic glow and artistically through his various crown attributes and, later, the nimbus.¹¹

The Roman and Sasanian empires each conceived of themselves as a universal domain that ruled the entire civilized world under a divine mandate. The earthly empire functioned as an icon of a divine kingdom, and the king was a reflection of God.¹² Although the Romans and Sasanians knew the literal extent of their empires and were aware of peoples and lands outside the borders, ideologically speaking, there was a discrepancy between the world as it was and the world as it ought to be. The terms used to refer to the empire, world, cosmos, or even throne room became increasingly interchangeable in evidence provided by inscriptions, panegyrics, and records of ritual acclamation.¹³ The Roman emperor, in ruling over the *orbis Romanus*, could understand himself to rule the *oikoumenē*—the inhabited world, the *orbis terrarum*—the whole earth, or even the *kosmos*, assertions that are abundant in the inscriptional sources.¹⁴ The third-century panegyric material especially articulates this idea: “now that the whole world [*toto orbe terrarum*] has been reclaimed through your courage, not only where it had been Roman, but thoroughly subjugated even where it had been the enemy’s.”¹⁵ The emperors are an elemental force implicated into the very fabric of nature,¹⁶ and their command “is not confined by the earthly boundaries but reaches the heavens.”¹⁷ Elements of the emperor’s insignia, such as the globe, symbolized his world dominion, and in the arch

of Galerius personifications of heaven and earth serve as footstools for Diocletian and Maximian.¹⁸

Acclamations from fifth- and sixth-century Roman imperial accessions explicitly articulate these parallels between the empire and world, and emperor and the Christian God, with the emperor as God's gift for the world's well-being. The army elected Leo I with this acclamation:

Listen, O God, we beseech you, listen, O God, [let there be] life for Leo, listen, O God. Rule, O Leo; O philanthropic God, the state [*to pragma to demosion*] chooses Leo, the army chooses Leo, the laws await Leo, the palace awaits Leo; these are the prayers of the palace, these are the requests of the camp, these are the prayers of the senate, these are the prayers of the people; Leo, the *kosmos* awaits you.¹⁹

With Justin I's first appearance in the hippodrome the people chanted: "Abundance for the world [*oikoumenē*], you live so that you may reign; abundance for the state [*politeia*]; O Heavenly King, save the earth [*epigeion*]; O Justin Augustus, you conquer"; and later: "O worthy one of the empire, O worthy of the Trinity, O worthy of the city; many years for the emperor; hallowed ruler of the world" and "God save the Christian emperor, these are the prayers of the world [*oikoumenē*]." ²⁰ Several numismatic types reflect the words of the acclamation and show the Roman emperor to be a Deo coronatus.²¹

Throughout late antiquity Sasanian sovereigns increasingly envisioned their empire as universal as well, with the Sasanian king of kings reigning at the center of Iran, Iran at the center of the empire, and the Sasanian empire at the center of the earth. Iranian and Zoroastrian cosmological speculation produced a detailed geographical and cosmological explanation of Iran's terrestrial centrality. According to Iranian cosmology, the earth was divided into seven continental sections (Av. *Karšuuar*, Mid. Pers. *kišwar*); the central *kišwar*, called *X^vaniraθa* (Av.; Mid. Pers. *Xwanirah*), was the largest and the only one originally inhabited by humans.²² *Airīianəm vaējō* (Av.; Mid. Pers. *Ērānwēz*), "the land of the Aryans," was, according to Ahura Mazdā, "the first and the best of places and habitations."²³ It lay at the center of *X^vaniraθa*, and all other nations and peoples eventually spread into the other continents constellated around it.²⁴ The early Sasanians refashioned this concept of *Ērānwēz* into an imperial statement, developing the ideological and geographical concept of *Ērānšāhr*, "Kingdom of the Iran," to accentuate their realm's *Arya*, Mazdā-worshipping tradition that they saw as descendant from the Achaemenids and Kayānids, and to cast their Parthian predecessors as non-Aryan foreigners.²⁵ The later Sasanians developed this concrete geographical (albeit exaggerated) concept into an even

more fluid global assertion. Late Sasanian titles preserved in the late Roman sources record this inflation of astral, even cosmic, imagery; the titles of Kōsrow II offer an example: "king of kings, master of dynasts, lord of nations, prince of peace, savior for mankind, among the gods a righteous and immortal man, a god manifest among men, most glorious, victorious, who rises with the sun and gives eyes to the night."²⁶

If the king and his actions instituted cosmological stability, then his enemies must find their parallels in the enemies of divine order. The Sasanian and Roman sovereigns enthusiastically and thoroughly executed what they saw as their privilege, and even duty, of imposing order on the world, and the two courts sought to control their opponents with ritual and visual means as much as with military might. The Sasanian and Roman empires systematically applied this formula to the sovereigns' enemies, both internal and external. Depending on the rhetorical objective, they took turns casting their opponents—including each other—as enemies of God-given order or as fundamental elements in its maintenance.

Sasanian society was caste-based and hierarchical, and these social divisions were considered to be the result of a natural, divinely instituted order, whose duty it was the king of kings' to maintain.²⁷ Several Middle Persian sources use somatic metaphors—an outgrowth of Iranian microcosmic speculations—to express this idea:

As to the microcosm, ie man, Ohrmazd made it manifest in the same manner as he did the four estates of the world, in such a way that to the head corresponds the estate of priests, to the hands corresponds the estate of warriors, to the belly the estate of cultivators, and to the feet the estate of artisans.²⁸

The division of the body of man (corresponds to that of) the four estates of the world: to the head (corresponds) the estate of the priests, to the hands the estate of the warriors, to the belly the estate of cultivators and to the feet the estate of artisans.²⁹

Correspondingly, the sources describe disruptions of the God-given and royally enforced social order, using demonic and physically aberrant terms.³⁰ The Sasanian kings made several attempts to impose stricter moral and visual distinctions between social strata, and kings such as Kōsrow I instituted barriers against intercaste marriages to prevent social mobility.³¹ Like any change, these were most always expressed in terms of a restoration of a past order.³² In an oration by Justin II, Roman society was similarly imagined as a human body, and its hierarchy understood to be God-given. Justin II emphasized the need to use violence to preserve and enforce this hierarchy: "One animal is made up of many limbs, but it is the head which rules the limbs.

Therefore God the creator making man . . . † . . . so that the head should rule all the limbs. And that they may be ruled the head was given wisdom, which abiding in the top of the body watches the limbs with calm eyes."³³

The Sasanian kings fervently applied the extreme dualism of Zoroastrian cosmology to earthly political and social realities, bending them to this supernatural opposition and celebrating their application of violence as rightful, divinely ordained.³⁴ The idea of the king as enforcer of divine order and mediator between God and man was present in Sasanian culture from the beginning of the dynasty, with rock reliefs and inscriptions providing some of the most evocative as well as trustworthy evidence.

In Sasanian official expressions, whoever dared oppose the king of kings had clearly been led astray by Ahreman or was simply one of his demonic miscreants. While this is clear in early visual expressions under Ardašīr I and Šāpūr I, in his third-century inscription, Narseh explicitly asserted that his rival's deeds were the result of demonic actions: "Wahnām, son of Tatrūs [through] his own falsehood and [(with) the help?] of Ahrimen and the devils, attached the Diadem [to the head of Warahrān, King of the Sakas?]"³⁵ Through the lens of Sasanian ideology, the usurper has thus become a conduit for Ahreman's evil works, and, like his master, had corrupted the divinely ordained order set in place by the true sovereign. In ridding the world of the forces of chaos, those who lie and break covenants, the Sasanian kings saw a divine prototype for their actions in those of the closely associated gods Mihr (Av. *Miθra*) and Warahrān (Av. *Vərəθraγna*, lit. "smiting of resistance"), Mihr being the god of covenants, and Warahrān the god of righteous violence.³⁶ Together Mihr and Warahrān were the relentless agents of divine vengeance, and the hymns celebrating them were as brutal and bloody as the kings of kings' own actions.³⁷ As heroic, martial gods, they were popular with kings and commoners alike, and evidence of their fame in the Middle Iranian period is widespread.³⁸ Through throne names, crown attributes, hunting quarry, and a rich variety of textile and architectural motifs, the Sasanian kings predicated their identity on these gods.

Roman imperial treatment of violence evolved in a different manner, with such discourse reaching a crescendo under the Tetrarchy; however, the overall message was similar to that of the Sasanians: any rebellion against the emperor was a rebellion against a divinely established cosmological order. Visual and panegyric evidence alike proclaim the Tetrarchic conviction that the emperors act with divine virtue and that their deeds are the terrestrial equivalent of those of their divine ancestors. The names of the two sacred "dynasties," Iovius and Herculus, indicated not only that Jupiter and Hercules elected, protected, and assisted these emperors, as was certainly familiar

from earlier practice, but also asserted that the emperors actually took part in the gods' divine essences, trumping any previous imperial statement of divinity.³⁹ The titles Jovian and Herculan function as descriptors of the sort of powers (*virtutes*) each was endowed with: whereas Maximian had Hercules' ability to endure and accomplish ceaseless superhuman labors, Diocletian had Juppiter's mandate for imposing god-given order in the world and banishing the forces of chaos.

Selections from the *Panegyrici Latini* dedicated to Maximian contain several allusions to his and Diocletian's deeds as hypostases of Hercules' labors or Juppiter's triumph over the Titans.⁴⁰ Tetrarchic visual culture reflects these connections, too. An aureus makes this same linkage through its reverse depiction of Juppiter seizing a snake-legged Titan by the hair with his left hand while preparing to dispatch him with a bolt of lightning. Similarly, reverses of Maximian's aurei carried images of Hercules' victory over the Hydra. Images of the Gigantomachy form the frieze in Diocletian's rotunda at Split.⁴¹ The panegyric, numismatic, and ornamental material makes explicit a strong, qualitative linkage between the work of the gods, who rid the world of monstrosities and the forces of chaos, and the actions of the emperors, who, in sharing in and acting out of the gods' *virtutes*, were understood to be doing the work of the gods on earth.⁴²

Although the Roman emperors became Christian, with the empire itself following slowly after, the *imperatores Christianissimi* inherited and adapted the ritual and visual techniques that their predecessors, the Tetrarchic *imperatores sacratissimi*, had used to express their sacred nature. While not as systematically developed as Zoroastrianism, Christian cosmology's own dualistic tendencies proved to be an extremely useful tool that the many Roman emperors seized upon to portray their own actions as divinely ordained and those of their enemies as satanic. With the precedent of their Tetrarchic predecessors initially as important as the new faith, Christian emperors, beginning with Constantine, continued to assert that they were doing divine work in ridding the world of demonic and aberrant creatures by vanquishing their rivals. According to Eusebius, Constantine,

displayed in a very high panel set before the entrance to the palace for the eyes of all to see, showing in the picture the Saviour's sign placed above his own head, and the hostile and inimical beast, which had laid siege to the Church of God through the tyranny of the godless, he made in the form of a dragon borne down into the deep. For the oracles proclaimed him a "dragon" and a "crooked serpent" in the books of the prophets of God (cf. Isaiah 27:1); therefore the Emperor also showed to all, through the medium of the encaustic painting, the dragon under

his own feet and those of his sons, pierced through the middle of the body with a javelin, and thrust down in the depths of the sea. In this way he indicated the invisible enemy of the human race, whom he showed also to have departed to the depths of destruction by the power of the Saviour's trophy which was set up over his head. This was what the colour of the paints indicated through the medium of the picture; but I was filled with wonder at the highmindedness of the Emperor, and at the way he had by divine inspiration portrayed what the words of the prophets had proclaimed about this beast: "God will bring", they said, "the great and fearful sword against the crooked dragon-serpent, against the dragon-serpent who flees, and will destroy the dragon in the sea" (cf. Isaiah 27:1). The Emperor certainly portrayed images of these things, setting true representations in pictorial art.⁴³

Eusebius, a contemporary witness, clearly understood the political significance of such an image and unhesitatingly imputed eschatological significance from his Christian background to Constantine's actions.⁴⁴ Constantine also deployed this serpent imagery, which several of his later successors adapted, on bronzes issued exclusively from Constantinople.⁴⁵ To Eusebius the image of the dragon-serpent was at once a representation of Constantine's earthly rival and the "invisible enemy of the human race," though a traditional polytheist familiar with Diocletian and Maximian's imagery would have found Constantine's visual celebration of his victory over his rival, Licinius, equally forceful and significant.⁴⁶

Both empires cultivated a sacred status for their sovereigns that the majority of their subjects and external powers could perceive as overtly divine, without transgressing their own religious or social mores. This willingness to inhabit a grey area between official, legal, or religious strictures and the more allusive expressive world of art and ritual was a tool that the applied to their mutual relationship as well after the late third century. As we will see, this enabled them to exist simultaneously in bitter enmity and brotherhood and continually cultivate images and expressive events that spoke to both.

CONTINUITY AND INNOVATION

The Roman and Sasanian courts cultivated traditional triumphal motifs, such as the time-honored figures of submitting Persians bearing gifts or the defeated Roman emperor trampled underfoot, from the fourth century well into the seventh century. In addition, motifs such as winged Victories and diadems continued to appear in these triumphal contexts and functioned as

cross-cultural mediators, communicating assertions of power and royal identity in both visual cultures. Despite their longevity, however, the two realms' traditional triumphal repertoires became more abstract and were adapted for new contexts.

In late Roman triumphal visual culture, images of the defeated "Eastern" enemy, soldier, and even the king of kings continued to have an important place both numismatically and monumentally; however, like representations of northern barbarians, these figures persisted in Roman visual culture primarily as a means to promote the emperor as *victor omnium gentium* in a decidedly abstract sense.⁴⁷ While such imagery often arose during periods of conflict between the two realms, it largely referred to victory and dominance over the Sasanians in a continuous and general sense rather than commemorating a particular victory. Christian art and architecture, however, quickly became an important arena for imperial expression, at first supplementing and soon rivaling the traditional imagery and venues.⁴⁸ Imperial attention, like the Roman world as a whole, focused increasingly on Constantinople's urban environment at the expense of the city of Rome and provincial imperial residences. Indeed, the history of imperial art and ritual, as almost all other aspects of Roman culture, becomes inextricably intertwined with the history of the city of Constantinople, whose population grew rapidly as a result of imperial incentives.⁴⁹

Sasanian royal visual culture underwent several changes as well. The Sasanian kings moved away from the specific representations of triumph of the type that Šāpūr I developed, and promoted a more abstract and transcendent image of themselves and their kingship. While representations of the king of kings lording over specific enemies disappeared after the mid-fourth century, images of the Sasanian sovereign enthroned in solitary glory or hunting became ubiquitous. After the late fourth century, monumental rock relief sculpture fell out of vogue as a medium of triumphal expression for the Sasanian kings of kings, not to return until Kōsrow II's final brilliant reprise of the genre two centuries later.⁵⁰

Both cultures' responses to the mid-fourth century confrontations between Šāpūr II and the Constantinian dynasty represent the last time that the two sovereigns overtly represented each other in their triumphal expressions in any way similar to Šāpūr I's and Galerius's statements. During the 340s, Constantius II and Šāpūr II were locked in a bloody conflict that came to a not-so-conclusive end in 348 with the battle of Singara.⁵¹ Constantius II claimed it as a victory, although it was closer to a draw that allowed both sides an opportunity to attend to disturbances elsewhere in their empires.⁵² At roughly the same time, the co-emperors Constans and Con-

stantius II reformed the Roman mint, introducing smaller denomination coinage as well as several new types.⁵³ All these types dealt in some way with imperial military prowess, with several referring directly to Rome's relations with Šāpūr II.⁵⁴ These obverse types depict such scenes as a Roman in armor, lording over Eastern and Western barbarian captives, brandishing arms and holding the *labarum* on warships, riding down barbarians or leading one out of a hut, all in seeming visual demonstration of Constantius II's later title in a letter written to Šāpūr II: *victor terra marique*.⁵⁵

As a part of this series, an obverse type of a large Roman soldier spearing a falling Sasanian horseman appeared in several mints throughout the empire.⁵⁶ Mints under Constantius II's control—especially those in the East—struck this type the most often, and Constantius II continued it after he became sole emperor.⁵⁷ The type varied in some of these mints, but on those coins struck at Antioch there was no question who the fallen Eastern horseman was: the Sasanian king of kings.⁵⁸ In contrast to the "Phrygian cap," the semi-generic headgear of the Eastern barbarian, which might roughly correspond to the headgear of Sasanian nobility in rock reliefs and seals, this specific type clearly depicts the Sasanian royal *korymbos*, with streaming diadem ties denoting the king of kings.⁵⁹ It is possible that this type referred to a particular victory, if not initially, then in its revised version later. However, it performed the dual function of continuously defining the Roman emperor as victor in relation to the Sasanian king of kings. In an ideological move now familiar from expressions in both empires, its legend, *FEL TEMP REPARATIO* ("Restoration of fortunate times"), implied that this particular, dubious "victory," represented and met a generalized, ideal state of affairs.⁶⁰ The eastern mints, and especially Antioch, struck the majority of this type, not surprisingly, considering that Antioch lay within striking distance of the Sasanians and had suffered terribly at the hands of Šāpūr I.

Sasanian visual culture responded to these fourth-century clashes, too, though not to the extent that Šāpūr I had in his reign. The rock relief Ṭāq-e Bostān I is the most prominent commemoration of the Sasanian defeat of Julian's invasion (363), although its reference to it, in the form of Julian's dead, defeated body, is subordinate to the relief's overarching claims of legitimacy (see fig. 19).⁶¹ The relief explicitly conflates two familiar ideas: a right to rule through divine sanction and victory over the Roman emperor. This relief differs markedly from all other Sasanian rock reliefs in terms of workmanship, sculptural style, and composition, although it shares many of the basic conventions, such as the trampling of an enemy, the bestowal of a diadem, and a divinity blessing the proceedings with a *barsom*. Relief I at Ṭāq-e Bostān portrays four figures, three standing and one lying prone



Figure 19. Rock relief, depicting the investiture of Ardašir III and triumph over the Roman emperor Julian II (r. 361–363). Tāq-e Bostān (Tāq-e Bostān, relief I), near Kermānšāh, Iran. (Photo by author.)

cradling his head with his right arm in a manner similar to representations of other defeated enemies, such as Gordian III in Bīšāpūr III and II. Although his clothing is relatively nondescript, the striking similarity of the prone figure's jeweled diadem, short hair, and characteristic straight beard to details in Julian II's (360–363) coin portraits clearly identify the figure as the defeated emperor (see fig. 20).⁶² A rayed nimbus surrounds the head of the far left figure who holds a *barsom*, identifying him as Mithra (Av. Miθra, Mid. Pers. Mihr).⁶³ There is, however, no scholarly consensus on the identities of the two figures in Sasanian dress who stand in triumph over Julian.⁶⁴ Their crowns match most closely those of Šāpūr II and Šāpūr III's brother, Ardašir II, who succeeded him for a brief period.⁶⁵ For purely compositional and iconographic reasons, Ardašir II seems the most likely; however, both figures had a role to play in defending Iran from Julian's invasion and had reason to commemorate their part in it.

D. MacDonald recognized another celebration of the Sasanians' defeat of Julian in a seal now in the British Museum that reflects the media, though



Figure 20. Detail of Julian II. Țāq-e Bostān, relief I. (Photo by author.)

not the composition, of Šāpūr I's cameo.⁶⁶ The seal portrays a Sasanian king trampling a defeated enemy, thrusting his spear into the back of the figure's neck. Quite significantly, this defeated enemy holds his left arm in the same posture as the prone figure at Țāq-e Bostān I and appears to wear a rudimentary depiction of Roman armor. The king wears the crown of Bahrām IV (388–399), whose reign was undistinguished by any major battles with the Romans.⁶⁷ However, as MacDonald suggests, much like Ardašīr II at Țāq-e Bostān I, Bahrām IV capitalized on his purported past contribution to Julian's defeat with such imagery to demonstrate his own fitness for the throne during his regnal years. The fallen "Roman figure" shows little in the way of identifying characteristics, but it is entirely possible that all those who participated in this campaign would feel the need to capitalize on it, especially given the dramatic threat that Julian's invasion presented to the kingdom, a memory that would still have been fresh. That both the seal and Țāq-e Bostān I portray nonequestrian trampling scenes suggests that they could have belonged to a body of fourth-century court expressions that varied the earlier conventions that Ardašīr I and Šāpūr I established, though the available evidence allows no more than such a broad inference.

COSMIC AND ENCRYPTED IMAGES OF TRIUMPH

Although Roman emperors continued to sponsor impressive public monuments throughout the fourth century, after Galerius's victory the Romans enjoyed no further successes against the Sasanians of equal stature to warrant such a specifically celebratory monument until Heraclius, who was unable or uninterested to do so. Perhaps as a partial result of their more moderate battlefield successes, Roman ideology and images of victory became more and more abstract and nonspecific, and the figure of the "eastern enemy" receded into a subordinate position, taking its place at the side of the "northern enemy." The traditional imagery of the Persian submitting or taken captive was an understated yet important and institutionalized component in expressing the emperor's victorious nature in several of the most prominent monuments built by the Theodosian dynasty in late fourth- and fifth-century Constantinople, including Theodosius's obelisk base and the column of Arcadius.⁶⁸

Theodosius I's obelisk monument in the hippodrome of Constantinople illustrates this iconographic role within the new images of transcendent kingship (see fig. 21; maps 1 and 2). Primarily a dynastic and victory monument for Theodosius, it interacted with the most dramatic moments in the hippodrome activities.⁶⁹ At the time of Theodosius I (r. 379–395) the hippodrome games already had a long history in their earlier incarnations at the Circus Maximus in Rome, in the many imperial residences of the Tetrarchic era, and in many decades of performance in the newly imperial Byzantium.⁷⁰ By the late fourth century the hippodrome of Constantinople was the empire's most important public space, functioning as a vital point of mediation between the Roman world's many spheres of power.⁷¹ Accordingly, the games as well as the space itself became a magnet for a spectrum of cosmological symbolism, both Christian and pagan.⁷² The hippodrome hosted liturgically repetitious chariot races as well as rarer events, such as imperial accessions, triumphs, and depositions, which defined the relationship between imperial power and all strata of Roman society from the aristocracy to the military to the people.⁷³ In addition to reflecting Roman social dynamics, like the liturgy of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia, the ritual environment engendered by the space defined and enacted the relationship of Rome's earthly hierarchy to the celestial hierarchy, especially imperial power to divine power. It was here that the emperor manifested his cosmological place as a perpetually victorious divine ruler—a god in the microcosm of the games and the space.⁷⁴

In 390, Theodosius intervened in this important civic and ritual site by raising an obelisk brought to Constantinople years before by Constantine I at



Figure 21. Remains of hippodrome of Constantinople, with remains of Delphic tripod (foreground) and obelisk monument of Theodosius I (r. 379–395). (Photo by author.)

the center of the hippodrome as a monument to his victory over two usurpers and to his “everlasting dynasty.” Different from other imperially raised obelisks, this monument was supported by a four-sided base decorated with sculptural friezes, which in effect augmented the height as well as the visual information and symbolism of the traditional Egyptian monolith.⁷⁵ In raising this monument Theodosius not only brought the Constantinopolitan hippodrome to completion—following in the footsteps of Augustus, who adorned the Circus Maximus in Old Rome, and Constantine, who, decades before, had initiated this project for the hippodrome of New Rome—but permanently linked the presence of the emperor to the performance of all events there.⁷⁶

Taken by itself, the sculptural program of the obelisk base merely reflects events that might have unfolded around it; it serves as a “mimetic agent capable of recreating events in the minds of viewers” whose primary function was to “record events” and provide a “place and prop” for imperial messages.⁷⁷ Yet its full significance extended beyond the information contained in its images and inscriptions. Rather than a lithic mirror held up to the *kathisma* or a conduit for propaganda for the grandstand, because of its context the monument was an active participant in the ceremonial and ludic dramas performed below, and the outcome and meaning of the events below were predicated on its visual “enactment.” In this symbolic space, where the obelisk functioned as the sun and the chariots as the planets or seasons, any living emperor played the role of *kosmokratōr* supported by Theodosius’s constant visual prototype. Since Theodosius’s imagery was at the symbolic core of the space and provided the rituals’ context, all subsequent games in effect reenacted the events portrayed on the obelisk base, and Theodosius became the archetypal emperor, celebrated whenever any subsequent emperor held the games.

Like the games themselves, during this period the hippodrome began to function as a venue for victory celebrations.⁷⁸ An important aspect of this function was fulfilled by the west face of the obelisk base, on which foreign envoys—including northern barbarians on the left and Persians on the right—perform *proskynēsis* before the emperors seated above them in the *kathisma* (see fig. 22). The west face of the obelisk associated the normal hippodrome activities that celebrated the emperor as the source and cause of all victory with the emperor’s purported dominance over foreign envoys who seek his clemency and recognition. The image portrayed submitting barbarians in what appears to be a generalized performance of a ritual act that is made specific to the emperor and its architectural situation through its pictorial content and the placement of the monument itself. Whereas the representation of the submitting Sasanian envoys on the obelisk monument had some sort of tangible reference in the activities of the hippodrome and



Figure 22. Obelisk monument of Theodosius I, erected ca. 390. Detail of west face, with Persian envoys (*left*) performing *proskynēsis* before the emperor and his imperial colleagues enthroned in the *kathisma*, originally visible to the circus factions but not to any Sasanian envoy seated in the *kathisma* opposite. The Persians' costumes reflect contemporary Persian fashions of a type that came into vogue in the late fourth century. (Photo by author.)

diplomatic protocol, several of the faces of the base of the column of Arcadius depict defeated eastern barbarians alongside northern barbarians simply as a generalized victory attribute, similar to the winged Victories or armor trophies.⁷⁹ The inclusion of defeated or submitting Persians or "eastern barbarians" was subordinate to the monument's dynastic or contextual significances, yet it was at this point an expected component in the definition of the emperor as *undique victor*. Inasmuch as the two empires enjoyed one of their most peaceable periods at the end of Arcadius's reign, quite apart from any actual victories, these images reflected the state of things "as they ought to be." The Christian cross is a noticeable addition to the traditional iconography of victory. It is important to note, however, that the west face of the obelisk would never have been visible to a visiting Sasanian envoy, who would have joined the emperor in the *kathisma*.⁸⁰ This is the first monumental instance of an encrypted image of triumph: it was hidden from the view of any Sasanian envoys, yet constantly informed the Constantinopo-

litan populace's experience of the games and spectacle of Sasanian envoys sitting across from them in the *kathisma*.

TRANSFORMATION OF IMAGES OF TRIUMPH IN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH CENTURIES

This triumphal imagery persisted until the age of Justinian, although the remains are scant when compared to the images surviving on the Theodosian monuments. Smaller works provide the bulk of triumphal imagery during this period. Much like the base of the column of Arcadius, the Barberini ivory adapts the traditional visual language of victory to a Christian worldview (see fig. 23).⁸¹ The vertical axis running between the beardless apocalyptic Christ in the center of the top celestial panel and the victorious emperor on horseback in the central terrestrial panel implies that the emperor's actions are functionally linked with the apocalyptic appearance of Christ above. This divine linkage and sanction extend to the emperor's relationship with the cowering or submitting Sasanians. A figure wearing the traditional Iranian costume and nobleman's peaked hat holds his arms around the emperor's spear in a gesture of awe, suggesting (however far from the truth) that the Sasanians were cowed by the emperor's military prowess. In the bottom panel, as fruit of the emperor's military exertions, two figures in Iranian costume walk with their bodies inclined, bringing the emperor gifts that include a diadem, an overfilled vessel, and a feline. Two figures in a different sort of ethnic dress join these figures on the right and bring an elephant and a lion, all led by a winged Victory who holds a trophy. A seventh-century embroidery at the Victoria and Albert Museum continues this idea, depicting a mounted and nimbed emperor, holding a globe and a scepter, who conducts two bound captives in Iranian clothing.⁸² At the feet of the horse are a lion, to the right, and some sort of carnivore devouring a deer or gazelle.

Although it does not include an image of a Sasanian king of kings, Procopius interpreted Justinian I's colossal equestrian statue as a vital competitive statement directed against the Sasanian menace. It is indicative of the centrality of Rome's relationship with Iran that the principal connotations of this prominent urban feature, which dominated the Augusteum, and thus the visual approach to Hagia Sophia, pertained to the Romans' relationship with the Sasanians.⁸³ The statue itself originally portrayed the emperor Arcadius but was reworked and reused in Justinian's recreation of Hagia Sophia and its surrounds.⁸⁴ Justinian set the statue high on a copper-plated composite column, which caused it to tower above the open space of the Augusteum



Figure 23. Barberini ivory (34.2 by 26.8 cm). Central panel portraying a victorious Roman emperor with a figure in Persian dress cowering behind his spear; bottom panel portraying two figures in Persian dress (*left*) bearing gifts. Mid-sixth century. (Musée du Louvre, inv. OA 9063, Paris, France, Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, N.Y.)

and likely made the statue visible over its enclosure.⁸⁵ Like the statue's features, the purpose and significance of the monument were also reinscribed by Justinian to construct the Roman emperor as *semper victor* over the Persians. Procopius describes it as facing the rising sun and "directing its course, I believe, against the Persians."⁸⁶ He goes on to say that the statue stretches out its hands toward the rising sun, "spreading its fingers, command[ing] the barbarians [the Sasanians] who are there to stay in their homeland and not come any further."⁸⁷ Parallel in form and intent to this monument, Justinian celebrate a victory over the Sasanians at Dara with an equestrian statue in the hippodrome; it adds to the visual display of Roman mastery over the Persians on the *spina* that Theodosius's obelisk base began.⁸⁸

Justinian's monuments of Persian victory encrypt their purported bellicose message even more subtly than does the Theodosian obelisk base: the defeated Persian enemy is not prominent but is supplied primarily by the imagination of the Roman beholder, such as Procopius.⁸⁹ This is an important point to keep in mind when we consider the development of diplomatic ritual. The monuments of the city of Constantinople could present different meanings depending on the viewer and the intent of the emperor. From the experience of a carefully guarded envoy, the city could present impressive structures and spaces, but, if the emperor so wished, none that overtly challenged the Sasanian sovereign. With careful stage management, and from a contrasting physical and cultural perspective, these same urban features could act as a meaningful backdrop to the spectacle of a visiting envoy, reinforcing Rome's centuries-old triumphalist narrative.

Beginning with Constantine's appropriation of Christianity, as Roman triumphal imagery became more Christian, Christian iconography became more imperial.⁹⁰ The history of Christianity's interaction with the art and ritual of the Roman court is the topic of a separate study; here I would like to mention only one example that directly speaks to the two realms' interaction. Christian iconography appropriated the image of individuals in Iranian clothing offering gifts to a seated sovereign from Roman triumphal imagery to portray Matthew 2:1–12. Although emerging several centuries before the legalization of Christianity, the biblical text skillfully plays off of this well-established imperial theme among other several well-established aspects of Roman and Hellenistic art and ritual. Proclaiming Christ to be the true king of kings and saviour, offered a subversive statement in its original temporal context. Conversely, after Christianity became an imperial religion and imperially sponsored Christian art became one of the preeminent expressions of imperial ideology, the motif provided a ready triumphal template.⁹¹ In Matthew 2:1–12 an unspecified number of Magi from the East

(*magoi apo anatolōn*) come to Jerusalem looking for the king (or “emperor”) of the Jews (*Basileus tōn Ioudaiōn*) to render obeisance to Him (*proskynēsai autōi*) and offer precious gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.⁹² The image and the idea of the Magi had a long afterlife in Christian thought and visual culture, and the Magi changed in identity and appearance according to the education of the biblical exegete or the cultural and visual experience of the artisan and patron.⁹³ The three Magi’s long history, extending into the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and beyond, should not be forgotten, anymore than it should be retrojected onto late antiquity.

During the period of Roman and Sasanian coexistence, the word *magoi* linguistically and culturally referred to the Zoroastrian *mowbedān*.⁹⁴ The Romans understood that the *magoi* advised the Sasanian king on matters of war and government and accompanied him on campaign. It should not be forgotten that the Sasanians sent *mowbedān* into regions such as Armenia as an important component in their programs to convert populations to the “Good Religion” and culturally assimilate them.⁹⁵ Although perhaps not quite the idea that the author of Matthew meant to express, within the dynamic of the relations between the Christian Roman empire and Sasanian Iran, the idea that these representatives of the Zoroastrian priesthood would come and recognize the lordship of Christ was a useful and inherently competitive statement that constructed both the Iranian religion and the Sasanian empire as subordinate to the Roman religion—that is, Christianity.⁹⁶

It is no surprise then that late antique portrayals of the Adoration of the Magi should adopt the convention of the Sasanian envoys rendering *proskynēsis* in front of the earthly emperor to express this subordination. As early as the third century they came to be identified as kings as well as *magoi*, a double identity that coheres well with the training that Sasanian kings of kings and their client kings received as *mowbedān*. While the image of the three Magi did not always refer to Roman and Sasanian political struggles, in the right context—namely, linked to a Roman imperial body, space, or object—it had that possibility. The fact that late antique exegetes understood the Magi to come from various parts of the Sasanian empire reflects the struggles that the two empires engaged in to detach their rival’s client kings from the opposing empire and incorporate them culturally and politically into their own. The appearance at court of a client from one of these disputed marchland kingdoms would have been an event that any resident of Constantinople from the fifth through sixth century could have witnessed several times. Such appearances of the image in direct connection with the imperial presence provide an important religious and ideological complement to such traditional triumphal imagery as in the column of Arcadius or the Barbarini ivory.⁹⁷



Figure 24. Empress Theodora (r. 527–548) with the three Magi on the hem of her *chlamys*. Presbytery mosaic (church dedicated, 547), south wall, church of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy. (Photo by author.)



Figure 25. Detail of the three Magi on the hem of Theodora's *chlamys*. Presbytery mosaic, church of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy. (Photo by author.)

In this regard, the small but salient detail of the Magi on the hem of Theodora's *chlamys* in the San Vitale presbytery mosaic offers a dual commentary on the nature and significance of the empress's ritual activity (see figs. 24 and 25). There is no doubt that, in bringing gifts to the altar, Theodora performs an act analogous to that of the three Magi, who brought gifts before the true King of Kings.⁹⁸ However, in the context of Justinian's bloody conflicts with Kōsrow I, her act also asserts the subjection of the Iranian religion and sovereign to the Roman religion—Christianity—and Christ's earthly representative, the Roman emperor. This was primarily a statement meant for internal consumption, although it is possible that a Sasanian envoy would see and understand such imagery during an audience, especially considering that many Sasanian envoys were Christian.⁹⁹

In the first five decades of their interaction, the Roman and Sasanian courts adapted their indigenous imagery of triumph and legitimacy to respond to

the challenges that each other posed. Over the third and early fourth centuries, the two rivals played an ever-increasing and specific role in each other's ritual and visual expressions of power aimed at both domestic and international audiences. The two realms observed, responded to, and even appropriated each other's competitive statements in an ongoing process of agonistic exchange, and during this period a number of cross-cultural mediators, such as the gesture of obeisance, the divine bestowal of a crown or diadem, and the equestrian duel, emerge as commonplaces and sites of competition.

Looking back at the evidence, it is clear that these Roman and Sasanian innovations in triumphal rulership became involved in closer and closer conversation. The Sasanians under Ardašīr initially applied the same explanation for their aggression and expansion in the West that they used to legitimize their initial coup over the Arsacids—that is, the restoration of the order of things as it existed under their half-remembered royal ancestors. The Romans gave a name to these ancestors and interpreted them through the lens of their historical understanding of the Achaemenid past, a conception that the Sasanians in turn soon appropriated and refashioned. While the Romans applied their traditional triumphal imagery and activities to their new Eastern adversary, the Sasanians under Šāpūr I innovated an eclectic and vigorous visual culture of triumph to celebrate his unprecedented tide of victories against the Romans. These visual innovations paralleled Šāpūr I's expansion of Sasanian royal ideology, both of which the Romans countered and matched only under the Tetrarchy and Galerius. Beginning with these early expressions and interchanges, the two courts modified their indigenous forms and motifs to respond to their opponent's statements. The two visual cultures of triumph became more abstract after the third century as they began to adapt to new religious and political realities. At this point, while these images of triumph persist, they were not the only mode of communication between the two realms, nor were they the only means of defining the relationship between the two to internal and external audiences. With the dawn of a new age of accommodation and communication in the third century, this competitive imagery soon became subordinate to the empires' larger diplomatic conversation. In this regard, Theodosius's and Justinian's monumental triumphal expressions become fully intelligible only when set against the function of Constantinople's urban fabric in diplomatic ritual.

7 Unceasing Embassies

As early as the last quarter of the third century the Roman and Sasanian courts began to fashion a shared visual, ritual, and discursive language of legitimacy to conceptualize their coexistence. This phenomenon has received a modest amount of attention from scholars, who have focused almost discretely on textual evidence.¹ I build on these earlier approaches to examine the symbolic and ideological underpinnings of this cooperative discourse and its much richer, yet more elusive, visual and ritual complement. Before beginning it is important to stress that the fashioning of a language of legitimacy was an outgrowth, or better, a melding of the old Roman and Iranian ideologies of triumph and universalism. The sovereigns deployed this new, developing language of cooperation and accommodation alongside the old expressions of dominance, either selectively to internal audiences or, finding themselves in a situation of strength, as a tool to intimidate their rival and garner prestige on a global level. Indeed, outside of a rare handful of instances where discourse was purely hostile or cooperative, in conquest or true supplication, hostile and cooperative expressions most often occurred side by side, in equal measures.

One cannot fix with certainty the exact date of most of these ideas, since many of the earlier techniques, attitudes, and imagery certainly guided later developments. Some of the later developments were possibly retrojected into accounts of earlier events. For example, it is possible that Peter the Patrician's record (frag. 13) of the use of the phrase "two lights" on the part of Narseh's envoy in the late third century could have shaped later diplomatic language, or historiography, or conversely could been a retrojection of sixth-century conventions. Peter's access to sources and influence in later Byzantine political thought makes the former a stronger possibility than the latter.² Nevertheless, the emergence of Rome and Sasanian Iran's language of debate

and legitimacy clearly corresponds to the formation of a more regular diplomatic relationship.³ Whereas in previous decades, negotiations took place on the battlefield in an ad hoc manner, as was the case between Philip the Arab and Šāpūr I and between the Tetrarchy and Narseh, Roman and Sasanian relations stabilized in the late third century, at which time the courts began to send and receive regular embassies.⁴

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SACRAL DISCOURSE

It is clear to all mankind that the Roman and Persian empires are equal like two lights, and it is necessary that, like eyes, one is continuously made more beautiful by the other and not by hostile treatment that seeks for their mutual destruction.

Peter the Patrician, frag. 13

One of the earliest steps in establishing a system and language for communication between Rome and Iran was the practice of notifying the other sovereign at the time of an accession. The first solid piece of evidence for the phenomenon comes from Narseh's Paikuli inscription, where the king of kings lists the Roman emperor along with a number of his client kings.⁵ Although the king of kings tailored the inscription to his internal audience, it is clear that recognition of the Roman emperor was a supremely important tool that helped Narseh establish legitimacy and stability. This may not have been the first time that the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns exchanged such a notification; but before this era, peace and stable leadership were rare, making such an occurrence nearly impossible. Once established, however, the practice became an integral and expected element in Roman-Sasanian relations as diplomatic exchanges became regularized.⁶

While hosting such an embassy was a benign gesture on the surface, both realms regularly portrayed these events to their internal audiences as evidence of the other realm's subjection. Narseh's Paikuli inscription indicates that the Roman emperor "came to him," which may indicate an embassy, and, of course, serves as evidence that the Roman emperor was the first of the sovereigns over whom Narseh's dominion extended.⁷ Conversely, a panegyric to Maximian proclaims:

The Great King of Persia, who has never before deigned to confess that he is but a man, makes supplication to your brother [Diocletian] and throws open the whole of his Kingdom to him, if he should consider it worthy to enter. He offers him, besides, marvelous things of various kinds and sends him wild beasts of extraordinary beauty. Content to request the name of friend, he earns it by his submission.⁸

Eusebius records that Šāpūr II “saw fit to seek recognition by Constantine through an embassy.”⁹ Later panegyric material echoes this same general sentiment. When Šāpūr III sent such an embassy to the Romans to announce his accession, Pactatus’s panegyric to Theodosius acknowledges they are allies but offers an “ideologically correct” interpretation clearly meant for internal consumption. He boasts that the Sasanian king, “who once disdained to concede he was a man, now confesses his fear and worships you in those very temples in which he is worshipped. Then by sending an embassy, and offering gems and silks, and in addition by supplying triumphal animals for your chariots, although in name he is still your ally, in his veneration of you he is a tributary.”¹⁰ Corippus tells Justin II: “Even he who boasts himself the friend of the sun, who watches the lofty horns of the waning moon and reveres and takes omens from the night wandering blaze of stars is subdued by fear of you.”¹¹ Similarly, the two realms attempted to strategically portray the payments that the Romans made to the Sasanians. Following in the footsteps of Šāpūr I, Sasanian king of kings could portray Roman payments rendered to buy off a threatened attack or even for the defense of the Daryal Pass (the “Alan Gate”) as “tribute” (phoros).¹²

The language that the two realms devised to articulate their relationship was an outgrowth of their indigenous languages and metaphorical thought that they utilized individually to describe their own systems of sacral rulership. Through a mutual creative process, the Roman and Sasanian courts fashioned a sacred, yet religiously neutral, language. This new idiom emerged almost entirely in discourse generated between the two realms to describe the relationship of their empires as well as that of their individual sovereigns.

Roman and Sasanian Iran extended the cosmic imagery, somatic metaphors, and familial designations present in many of their indigenous expressions to articulate their relationship. According to their native formulations, the Sasanian sovereign was “brother of the sun and moon,” and the Roman emperors were elemental forces implicated into the very fabric of the *kosmos*, their command “not confined by the earthly boundaries but reach[ing] the heavens.”¹³ This same strategy of thought produced the cooperative designation of the two realms as “two lights,” “two eyes,” or “two worlds” created from the beginning of time to rule creation, the only font of true political legitimacy, and the guardians of civilization.¹⁴ This theme is repeated in several texts, nowhere more evocatively than in the preamble of a letter from Qobād I to Justinian: “[Qobād], king of kings, of the rising sun, to Flavius Justinian Caesar, of the setting moon.”¹⁵ An undertone of competition could enter into these overtly cooperative statements, as the

imagery and relative strength of the rising sun and setting moon suggests, although to Iranian cosmology the moon was indeed a divine being on a par with the sun, fulfilling an antidemonic role, and even instrumental in providing a refuge for Royal Glory during the night.¹⁶ Although, in their polemical exchanges, Constantine deployed Christianity as an imperial tool and a pretext for intervention in Iran, and the *mowbedān* *mowbed* Kerdīr boasted of the fires he founded in Roman territory, other than a reference to a generic deity, the two cultures' own specific religious tendencies were more of a flexible point of departure than dogma in their diplomatic language.¹⁷

The sovereigns' grandiloquent titles were a locus of competition as well as cooperation, and they exchanged them by means of letters, ambassadors, and even acclamations of armies.¹⁸ These titles were repeated as battlefield taunts by their soldiers, as recorded at the siege of Amida by Ammianus:

And so the night watches were passed under the burden of arms, while the hills re-echoed from the shouts rising from both sides, as our men praised the power of Constantius Caesar as lord of the world and the universe, and the Persians called Sapor "saansaan" [*šāhān šāh*] and "pirosen" [*pērōz*] which being interpreted is "king of kings" and "victor in wars."¹⁹

Similarly, according to Menander, Justinian's and Kōsrow I's envoys exchanged such competitive acclamations for their sovereigns as a matter of course in their negotiations concerning Lazika (561/2):

The letter of ratification from the Roman Emperor, bearing the usual superscription, is well known to us. The letter from the Persian king was written in Persian and the following is a Greek translation: "The divine, good, father of peace, ancient Khosro, king of kings, fortunate, pious and beneficent, giant of giants, formed in the image of gods, to Justinian Caesar, our brother."²⁰

During the same meeting, the Sasanian envoy reportedly went out of his way to "boast and exalt" Kōsrow I, delivering an extended soliloquy of sorts on the subject of his sovereign's invincibility.²¹

Familial language, for which both cultures had extensive indigenous precursors, emerged as the most important metaphor for the Romans and Sasanians to describe the various facets of their political relationship.²² Once established, brotherhood became the guiding principle of the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns' relationship, to the point that, like many aspects of their relationship, it was cast as a feature that had existed from ancient days.²³ The sovereigns incorporated these terms in their letters and in their diplomatic discussions with envoys, where, according to protocol, each would in-

quire about the “health of their brother.”²⁴ The most common designation of one sovereign by the other was “my brother.”²⁵ Eusebius’s *Life of Constantine* contains the first recorded instance of this soon-to-be conventional familial address. However, considering the conciliatory note of contemporary diplomatic material, it is possible that this convention arose earlier with the reemergence of parity between Rome and Iran that occurred between Diocletian and Bahrām II, and Galerius and Narseh.²⁶ It must be emphasized that according to the Sasanian worldview the Roman and Persian sovereigns were related to each other in a true genetic, rather than merely symbolic, sense.²⁷ According to the Sasanian version of the Iranian national epic tradition, Frēdōn (Av. Θraētaona), the grandson of Jamšēd (Av. Yima Xšaēta) and the last king to rule over an undivided world, apportioned his kingdom among his three sons, giving the best land, Ērān, to Ēraj, and the lesser realms of Rome and China (alternatively “Turkistan”) to his other sons, Salm and Tūz.²⁸ Much like the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns, these mythical kings of Ērān and Hrōm were both relatives and enemies, a theme that recurs throughout the Iranian epic tradition.²⁹ Given that Salm was a devious murderer who Ahremanically incited Tūz to assassinate the righteous Ēraj, the Persians very likely viewed the overtly friendly title of “brother” as tinged with the bloody irony of eons of deceit, fratricide, and vengeance.³⁰

At a few points the two sovereigns predicated their relationship on that of father and son, and sometimes this was even accompanied by efforts to forge actual “guardianship” agreements, which in most cases should be interpreted in the looser, metaphorical sense of the diplomatic language rather than legalistically. Familial language appeared in special cases where one sovereign sought the favors of the other as a suppliant or for cynical reasons, as a pretext for war. Whatever the eventual outcome of its use, familial language was an important mediating tool that helped the two realms define their relationship and solve political problems. The most famous application of this language dates to the early fifth century, when the Roman emperor Arcadius (495–408), in order to safeguard the throne from usurpers for his infant son, Theodosius II (408–450), appointed Yazdegerd I (399–420) as the child emperor’s guardian.³¹ In the sixth century Qobād I attempted to forge a similar agreement with Justin I, but with less success. To preserve the throne for his son Kōsrow I, Qobād I asked that Justin make Kōsrow I his adopted son (*eispoiēton paida*) in exchange for cessation of hostilities.³² Justin eventually declined this honor for fear that it would later give the Sasanians a pretext for war to seek Kōsrow I’s “inheritance.” and Procopius cites this rejection as reason for Kōsrow’s later hostility toward the Romans.³³

The sovereigns used the metaphor of father and son as a trope in the

course of their negotiations even when there were no guardianship agreements. When Tiberius and Kōsrow I attempted to begin negotiations for a treaty, Tiberius gained diplomatic advantage by strategically casting the much older king of kings' decision to pursue war or peace as the example set by a father for a son, which he would respond to in kind.³⁴ Both realms cultivated a sense of "global" royal legitimacy in which this familial language played a part, and even exploited it when it served their purpose.³⁵ When Kōsrow II sought assistance from the Roman emperor Maurice to recover his throne from the usurper Bahrām Čōbin, he called himself the Roman emperor's "son and suppliant" to gain the emperor's trust and favor.³⁶ But when Phokas overthrew Maurice, Kōsrow II used his "filial piety" and need to avenge his "father" as a pretext for invading the Roman empire.³⁷ Heraclius also used this trope, asking Kōsrow II to consider him his "child," though he quickly abandoned it for overt aggression.³⁸

For most of their coexistence, when the sovereigns referred to each other's official titles, they used circumlocution. From at least the time of Šāpūr I, the Sasanian monarch identified the Roman sovereign as the *Kēsar ī Hrōm*, allowing him a separate political designation in their communications that was not overtly subsumable under the Sasanian imperial title *šāhān šāh ī Ērān ud Anērān*, though it is clear that the Roman emperor was often portrayed as first among subject kings in internal propaganda.³⁹ Conversely, the Romans did not translate *šāhān šāh* literally and referred to the Sasanian king of kings as the *basileus tōn Persōn*, a convention that the Sasanians adopted under Kōsrow II and Qobād III as a polite concession while seeking Roman goodwill.⁴⁰ The sovereigns used these overtly friendly titles even in times of hostility; only in times of extreme enmity was the language dropped, as when relations completely soured between Kōsrow II and Heraclius.⁴¹ The description of the rival sovereign as a "senseless and insignificant slave" was tantamount to a declaration of a war of annihilation, or at the very least subjection, since this was the term (minus the added adjectives) that the Roman and Sasanian empires used to refer to subject people when debating among themselves.⁴²

ROMAN-SASANIAN DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGE

As their relations solidified in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the two courts conducted direct and increasingly more intricate diplomatic exchanges. Once it took hold, diplomatic exchange between Rome and Iran was arguably the most important avenue for communication between the

two courts and in a sense directly “spliced” their ritual and visual cultures.⁴³ Roman-Sasanian diplomatic exchange reached its apogee in the sixth century with the long coeval reigns of Justinian and Kōsrow I, and this period serves as an anchor for my discussion. During this period, the courts orchestrated massive spectacles and used their urban and palatial environments to instill in their rival’s representatives the experience of the cosmos as they saw it. As in the diplomatic language developed by the two courts, in which indigenous expressions were adapted for a new cross-cultural purpose, in the art and ritual of diplomacy, the two courts inscribed new cross-cultural meanings on the two empires’ most privileged urban spaces and structures. A wide variety of objects, spaces, and activities involved in the empires’ diplomatic exchanges served as media for this cross-cultural communication. These included objects that were given and received as gifts, throne room rituals, as well as the entertainments, culinary displays, and sundry other activities with which the two courts regaled each other’s envoys. Throughout this process, the two realms gained familiarity with, and even appropriated, the other’s techniques of ritual and display, remodeling themselves in response to each other’s statements.

For the study of late antique diplomatic ritual, we are extremely fortunate to have Peter the Patrician’s record of the sixth-century Roman court’s protocol for receiving a “Great Embassy of the Persians,” which Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus included in his tenth-century compilation.⁴⁴ Peter’s text has a markedly different tone from the empires’ official histories and reflects the practical mechanics needed to maintain fraternal equilibrium in place of the official rhetoric of subordination. It specifies what must be done to receive a Sasanian embassy properly and leaves little to chance, detailing the routes the envoy and his retinue should take, the various preparations and courtesies that the court should extend to him along the way and in the city, and of course the necessary ritual protocol to be followed during his audience. From clues within the text, it appears Peter composed it between 552 and 563.⁴⁵ His use of the Sasanian envoy Yazd-Gušnasp as the exemplar suggests that the protocols in the text reflect this envoy’s many visits to Constantinople.⁴⁶ Procopius and Menander Protector, along with a collection of other authors, supplement Peter’s record and add historical context. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, no primary source survives that elucidates Sasanian protocol to the same extent, although several later texts, such as the *Šāhnāma* and al-Jāhīz’s “Book of the Crown” offer some insights if approached judiciously.⁴⁷ However, given the simple but unyielding fact that much of diplomatic protocol was a careful balancing act to preserve the appearance of parity between the two realms, it is highly likely

that the Sasanians cultivated a protocol that matched Roman customs on all major points of courtesy, especially as pertained to such loaded ritual acts as the performance of prostration and the exchange of gifts.

Regular exchanges of envoys provided a direct point of contact between the sovereigns, as far as was possible in the ancient world, and offered a channel of communication between the two courts to defuse conflict and settle disputes.⁴⁸ Then as now, diplomacy provided a prime opportunity and useful screen for gathering intelligence and allowed the two sovereigns a chance to learn about vital topics, such as the health of their opponent and his military intentions, preparedness, and economic strength, not to mention possible invasion routes.⁴⁹ In contrast to modern diplomacy, however, the Sasanian and Roman courts did not maintain a permanent representative at their counterpart's court, and every embassy was in effect a single journey in which the envoy acted as his sovereign's personal messenger.⁵⁰ Needless to say, there were no face-to-face summits: other than in captivity or exile, no reigning Roman and Sasanian sovereigns ever met personally in the entire history of their empires' interaction.

The Roman and Sasanian courts classified embassies and the envoys that carried them out as either "great" (*presbeutēs megalos, megistos presbeutēs*) or "lesser" (*heteroi hēssones, smikra presbeia*).⁵¹ A lesser embassy had reduced or no negotiating power and usually carried out minor tasks, such as handing over letters and presenting prediscussed terms and treaties, while great embassies normally had plenipotentiary negotiating powers and were always headed by aristocrats of the very highest social rank.⁵² By the sixth century, after a great embassy it was the custom to send a lesser embassy to communicate the respective sovereign's gratitude for the good treatment of his envoy on the previous embassy and to settle any remaining issues that arose from it.⁵³ Needless to say, this greatly increased the volume of exchanges. The most important distinction between the two types of embassies was that in the great embassy the envoy acted as almost an analogue of his sovereign, a fact that had significant consequences for their ritual interaction when face to face.⁵⁴

Not all diplomacy took place at the capitals nor even in the presence of one of the two sovereigns. In certain instances, envoys met at the frontier to conduct negotiations.⁵⁵ The Sasanian king of kings sometimes received envoys while on campaign, either in provincial palaces, like Kōsrow I at the sanctuary of Ādur Gusnašp, or in the field and on the march.⁵⁶ When the Sasanian sovereign was on campaign, Roman envoys would meet and even accompany him; the envoy was thus expected to convey to his master first-hand proof of the king of kings' prowess if he was successful, or his defeat

if not.⁵⁷ While these marchland and martial negotiations involved much competitive discourse, when a sovereign received his counterpart's representative at his residence, the sovereign had the supreme opportunity to present competitive statements with the full resources of his realm's urban environment and royal rituals at his disposal.

ART, RITUAL, AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN DIPLOMATIC CEREMONIAL

Beyond the practical functions of negotiation, conflict resolution, and intelligence gathering, the art and ritual of diplomatic exchange presented a vast range of situations and activities that served as crucial sites of debate between the two realms. The rituals and spectacles associated with diplomatic exchange served venues in which the two realms negotiated their relational identity and dominance. The diplomatic protocol that emerged in the sixth century essentially spliced Roman and Sasanian court ritual, and, not surprisingly, the two courts closely controlled and stage-managed everything to do with this point of contact, bringing to bear massive amounts of monetary and human resources to ensure everything went according to plan.⁵⁸ Thus, as well as facilitating communication, the "unceasing movement of embassies" that the sources record brought the two civilizations closer together, fostering an intimate knowledge of each other's court culture. Centuries of diplomatic exchange taught the sovereigns to address, compliment, challenge, or insult their counterpart in a language that had meaning for both and encouraged them even to cultivate similar tastes and leisure activities, which provided a cultural common ground.⁵⁹ This intimacy with each other's culture, and shared tastes, emerged especially around what came to be shared marks of aristocratic distinction.

As explored in chapter 2, Roman and Sasanian cities and palaces played host to a multitude of overlapping ritual displays that bound together select architectural and visual elements to create a larger semantic whole. The diplomatic reception was one particularly privileged display that took advantage of several different urban features and otherwise discrete activities, but grew out of the same matrix. In other words, diplomatic ritual inscribed additional *cross-cultural* meanings on prominent architectural features in Constantinople and across Sasanian Iran and shaped key competitive statements in the two realms' interactions. Monuments such as the Chalke Gate, the Augusteum, Ādur Gusnašp, and Tāq-e Kesrā—not to mention the hipodromes of both Constantinople and Ctesiphon—became, in the logic of

the ritual event, monuments to Roman-Sasanian competition. Through meticulous stage-management and planning, the courts carefully cultivated the envoys' experience of the urban and ritual environment to instill in them an experience of the power of their sovereigns.

Roman diplomatic protocol was constructed in order to ensure that the Sasanian envoy and his retinue were both closely watched and given the impression that the emperor assiduously cared for their every need. All along the journey from the frontier and during his stay in Constantinople, the envoy received special tokens of imperial attention, including letters, gifts, and even delicacies from the imperial table. In the Roman empire, the *magister officiorum* (Gr. *magistros tōn ophphikiōn*) managed the Sasanian envoy's visit and himself was responsible for greeting the envoy, arranging his lodging, and conducting the ritual protocol involved in his visit. It is likely that the *magister* had an analogue in the Sasanian court hierarchy.⁶⁰ At the same time, the amount of direct contact that Sasanian envoys had with the Roman emperor was quite minimal and stage-managed, with several layers of personnel insulating the emperor and acting as go-betweens. The protocol began at the frontier between the cities of Dara and Nisibis, where a high official of equal rank with the envoy greeted him and accompanied him into Roman territory and on to Constantinople (map 2).⁶¹ At various stops in the more important cities along the way, such as Antioch and Nicaea, local dignitaries would entertain and take care of the envoy.⁶² At Chalcedon, just across the Bosphorus, the *magister* would send one of his subordinates from Constantinople to greet the envoy and give him gifts.⁶³ This began a long series of gift exchanges from the Romans to the Sasanian envoy and vice versa. The *Šāhnāma's* account, though not as detailed as that of Peter the Patrician, parallels Peter's surprisingly closely. When an ambassador came,

lodgings were prepared along the highway, a task which the governor [*marzbān*] performed. Clothing and food were provided and there was no lack of carpets and bedding. When the ["prime minister" (*kārdār*)] was informed of an arrival and had ascertained why the ambassador came to the king, a fine racing-camel and a scribe were dispatched to Shah Ardashir in order than an escort should be sent out to welcome the envoy.⁶⁴

In Constantinople the *magister* would send someone to receive the envoy at the harbor and to conduct him by horse to his quarters. The *magister* housed the envoy and his retinue in a specially designated palace and gave them exclusive use of one of the city's baths.⁶⁵ The text offers little information about the identity or location of the envoy's quarters; however, we

know it was outside the grounds of the Great Palace, but likely within walking distance. At this time the *magister* sent the envoy yet another gift through one of his subordinates and arranged for their meeting. Once settled, the *magister* received the envoy and his retinue in person.⁶⁶ The *magister* would interrogate the envoy politely, yet pointedly, about the health of the Sasanian sovereign, his children, and family, and that of various dignitaries at the Sasanian court, as well as about the quality of the envoy's journey, no doubt for the dual purpose of courtesy and intelligence gathering.⁶⁷ After this, the *magister* says:

"We have been ordered by our pious lord to do everything to take care of you. If then anything should be lacking, this is our fault and we beg you not to be aggrieved nor keep silent, but rather tell us, so that things can be made right," [and] then all those who are with (the envoy) render *proskynēsis* to the *magistros*, throwing themselves on the ground.⁶⁸

The envoy and his retinue then spent as much time as they needed to recuperate from their journey. This meeting began a repeated series of actions meant to ritually express the relative rank of all the actors involved—a curious pyramid of obeisance, whose apex, of course, was occupied by the emperor. This performance defined the *magister* and the envoy as equals, and all of the envoy's men as subordinates.

The next component of the text orchestrates the envoy's audience with the emperor, and it is here that the greatest effort is made to create a powerful experience of the Roman court and sovereign for the envoy. The day before the audience, the envoy would receive an official summons to appear at court.⁶⁹ Meanwhile the emperor would order that all the preparations for a *silentium* be carried out, while the *magister* ensured that all courtiers and guards who were required for the spectacle received their official summons so that they would be ready in their official clothing and with their ceremonial weaponry. A *silentium* was a joint meeting of the senate and the emperor's advisers (the members of the *consistorium*) and was the supreme ceremonial gathering in the late Roman empire.⁷⁰ Again, the fact that Roman-Sasanian diplomatic ritual emerged as an adaptation of the *silentium* is yet another example of how indigenous practices and traditions provided the point of departure for the fused, cross-cultural interactions of the two realms.

On the day of the audience, either by horse or by foot, the envoy and his retinue approached the grounds of the Great Palace by way of the Rēgia, the final section of the city's major thoroughfare, the Mesē (map 2).⁷¹ The Rēgia ran from the Forum of Constantine, passed through the Milion, and

then turned toward the Chalke Gate (Khalkē Pylē), the gate of the Great Palace where the public space of the city transitioned to the tightly controlled interior space of the Great Palace grounds.⁷² A double portico lined the *Rēgia* from the Forum of Constantine, and the *Chronicon Paschale* states that it was of marvelous beauty, ornamented with statues and many marbles.⁷³ The text does not specify where the procession began, although it is likely that it did so at a prominent urban space along the Mesē. Given its impressive size and significance to the empire, and its location within comfortable walking distance to the entrance of the Great Palace, the Forum of Constantine stands as a likely starting point for the beginning of the ceremony. All in all, the reception of the envoy bears a marked resemblance to other receptions held at the gate of the imperial palace, most notably that of the newly crowned emperor.

According to the text, “all the magistrates are present in silk [robes] while the envoy enters through the *Rēgia*.”⁷⁴ Thus the emperor made a point of displaying his courtly hierarchy to the Sasanian entourage as they headed toward the palace, in effect building up to his own dramatic appearance at the courtly apex during the audience itself. Besides impressing the envoy, the extended procession to the Great Palace gave the imperial court an opportunity to display the Sasanian envoy, his men, and the many gifts they brought with them to the people of Constantinople. Although he does not specifically name the Persians, Eusebius recalls the impact that the various foreign envoys who visited Constantine the Great had on Constantinople:

There were constant diplomatic visitors who brought valuable gifts from their homelands, so that when we ourselves happened to be present we saw before the outer palace gates waiting in a line remarkable figures of barbarians, with their exotic dress, their distinctive appearance, the quite singular cut of hair and beard; the appearance of their hairy faces was foreign and astonishing, their bodily height exceptional.⁷⁵

Essentially creating an organized spectacle out of foreign envoys, the emperor reenacted a tableau vivant for the court and populace, whose interpretive point of view was conditioned by the city’s many triumphal monuments, which themselves served as a backdrop for the ritual. Whatever the official intentions of the embassy, the emperor ensured that the Roman people perceived the Persian envoy’s visit as a demonstration of the power of the Roman emperor.

As the envoys entered this gauntlet of patricians in finery and turned to enter the palace, several monumental urban features loomed before them. Hagia Sophia’s dome and Justinian’s immense, looming bronze statue of the

emperor beating back the Persian menace would have hovered over the Augusteum.⁷⁶ At the end of the Rēgia, the Chalke Gate confronted the envoy and controlled his access to the Great Palace.⁷⁷ In addition to serving as the architectural representation of the emperor in the city, the Chalke had become an important monument to Justinian's military conquests in Italy and Africa and, ritually speaking, an integral feature in Roman-Sasanian exchange. Considering the gate's crucial placement in the diplomatic ritual, it is highly likely that one of Justinian's first considerations in directing its pictorial program was the effect that it would have within the reception ritual of his fiercest rival, the Sasanian king of kings. Beyond just demonstrating his military prowess, Justinian's Western victories played a special role in Roman-Sasanian relations, and the emperor did everything he could to display them in art and in ritual performance to Sasanian envoys present at court.

In the images Justinian used to showcase these victories, the Roman emperor constructed himself as a king of kings in a sense that was analogous to and competitive with Sasanian kingship. According to Procopius, the Sasanian envoy would pass under a vaulted, mosaic-decorated ceiling that depicted

war and battle, and many cities [being] captured, some in Italy, some in Libya; and the Emperor Justinian is winning victories through his General Belisarius, and the General is returning to the Emperor, with his whole army intact, and he gives him spoils, both kings and kingdoms and all things that are most prized among men. In the centre stand the Emperor and the Empress Theodora, both seeming to rejoice and to celebrate victories over both the King of the Vandals and the King of the Goths, who approach them as prisoners of war to be led into bondage. Around them stands the Roman Senate, all in festal mood So they rejoice and bestow on the Emperor honours equal to God, because of the magnitude of his achievements.⁷⁸

According to Procopius's description of the structure's architecture, Belisarius's campaigns occupied the side vaults, while the emperor and empress with the senatorial hierarchy occupied the dome—images reminiscent of the Justinian and Theodora portraits at San Vitale (see figs. 24 and 26).⁷⁹ The depiction of the Vandal and Gothic victories represents a strong declaration of Roman supremacy, yet one that is more intricate and subtle than that provided by Galerius's relief sculpture about two and a half centuries earlier. As the Sasanian envoy entered the gate, several parallels between the pictorial reality created by the structure's mosaics and his present position became apparent. The envoy, being a foreigner and a representative

of his king, was surrounded by select members of the Roman aristocratic hierarchy, as were the two defeated Gothic and Vandal kings. In the mosaic, the kings of the Vandals and Goths no doubt performed *proskynēsis* before Justinian, as the envoy himself would soon do before the emperor.

Inside the palace precincts, the *magister* received the envoy and his retinue in his chambers near the gate, which were part of a complex of rooms adjoining the Chalke that were reserved for the palace guards (*Scholae*).⁸⁰ Here a curious, yet evidently crucial, transaction occurs:

He [the *magister*] asks [the envoy] if he has gifts for the emperor. [The *magister*] must see them all before entering, to take account of them. The *magister* then goes in to the emperor, brings him the (description) of the gifts, and gives him the account, while the envoy remains in the office (*scholē*) of the *magister*.⁸¹

Because the gifts could carry a strong symbolic charge, while the envoy and his men sat in the *magister's* chambers, the *magister* informed the emperor of what lay in store for him so that there was no room for surprise. What kinds of surprises the gifts might hold is revealed farther along in the text, where instructions are provided for how to make the entrance to the audience hall ready if the gifts included large animals like horses.⁸² We know that Sasanian kings of kings often sent wild animals, even elephants, as gifts, though it is questionable whether such a gift was ever paraded into the audience hall itself.⁸³ This initial gift appraisal was a prelude to more intensive evaluations, which occurred later both within the public ritual protocol and behind the scenes.

Then, the *magister* conducted the envoy to the “great summer *consistorium*.” Here the envoy waited at a site called the *antikonsistōrion* with translators and minor officials who also acted as his handlers while in the city, at which time the court readied itself inside.⁸⁴ The “great summer *consistorium*” has not been securely located; however, we can gain a general idea of the envoy’s experience of the Roman throne room from the remains of a structure called the *Augusteus*, which has been excavated and identified.⁸⁵ A grand, basilica-form hall with an apse measuring 32 by 16.5 meters, this structure evidently served as one of the preferred audience halls during Justinian I’s reign and, according to Peter the Patrician’s protocol, was where the emperor received the Persian envoy on his subsequent visits to the Great Palace.⁸⁶ While only the foundations of the *Augusteus* can be reconstructed, the mosaics of its 65- by 55.5-meter peristyle forecourt survive.⁸⁷ Given the mosaics’ placement preceding the audience hall, it is certain that Persian envoys beheld such imagery as they moved to an audience,

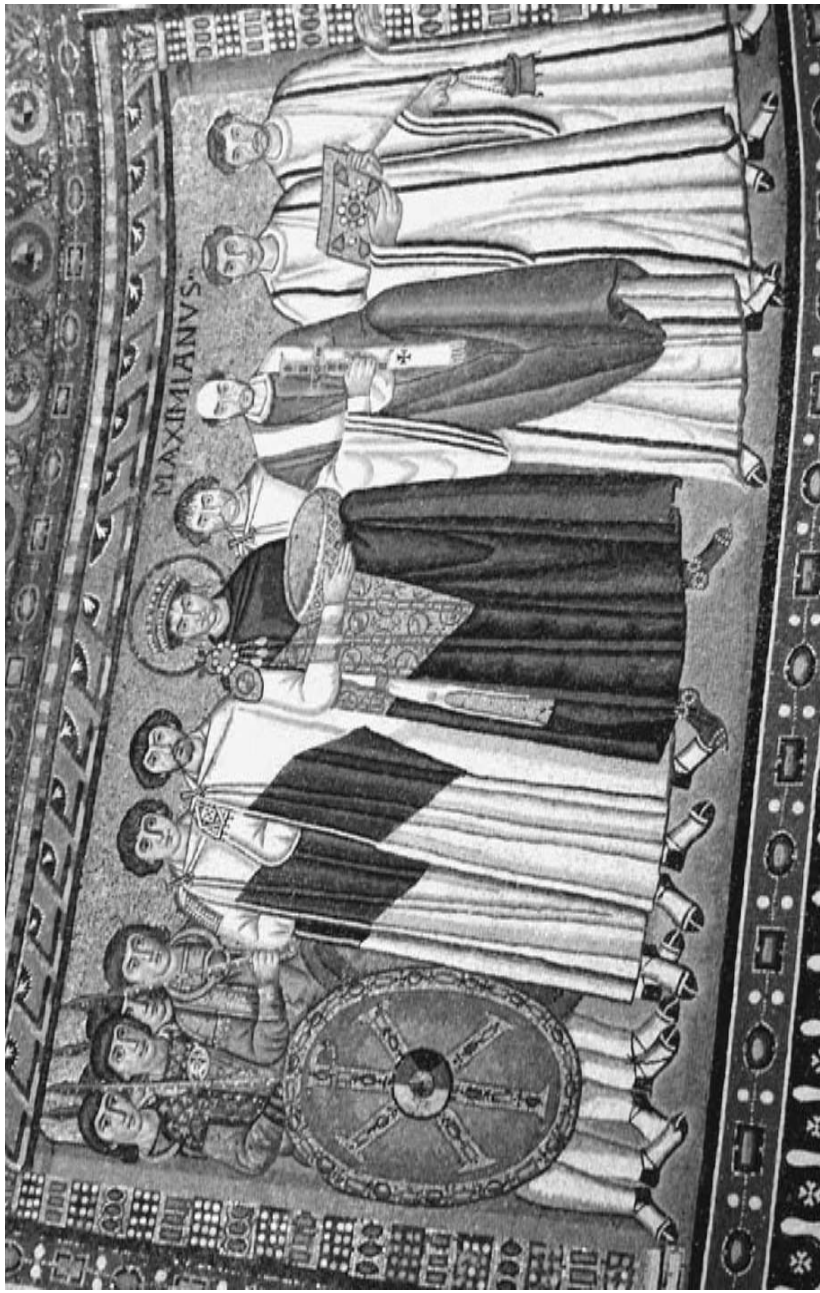


Figure 26. Emperor Justinian I with bodyguard, senators, and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Presbytery mosaic, north wall, church of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy. (Photo by author.)

and, in a variation of the protocol, the emperor could receive the envoy in the courtyard itself.⁸⁸ During these receptions, the envoy and his men encountered a courtyard filled with images of sublimated combat, including scenes of animals locked in battle and images of the hunt, which were interspersed with other more idyllic and pastoral scenes, forming almost a visual statement of the virtues of peace and the dangers of conflict. The hunt mosaics, as well as the associated imagery of animals such as elephants, lions, and griffins in combat with each other or feasting on a captured herbivore, convey a general message of sublimated violence, though less pointed than that of Sasanian representations of the king hunting.⁸⁹

When the Sasanian emissaries had taken their place in the *antikōnsistorion*, and all was ready, the emperor himself entered from his chambers and would seat himself on the throne. The officials then positioned the envoy directly in front of the silk veil that screened off the inner sanctum.⁹⁰ Then, the climax of the diplomatic ritual began.

After all the officials have entered, the *magister* summons (the envoy) according to (this) convention: "Let *Iesdekos* [Yazd-Gušnasp], the envoy of Chosroēs [Kosrow I] the emperor of the Persians, and those accompanying him be called!"⁹¹

The Roman court orchestrated the next sequence of events to instill awe and surprise in the envoy. Once the summons had been read, the emperor's ceremonial guard (*candidati*) entered the audience hall and took their places.⁹² After the sound of spears and shields brought to the ready, the envoy would hear the Latin command "Leva!" at which point the veil would be raised to reveal the emperor enthroned under a baldachin supported by winged Victories, with members of the aristocratic hierarchy and the honor guard surrounding him.

When the veil has been raised, the envoy throws himself to the ground inside the purple marble [disk, inlaid on the floor], renders *proskynēsis*, and stands up. After he comes inside the door, he throws himself down again and renders *proskynēsis* on the floor. He does this again in the middle of the *konsistōrion* and then goes and kisses the [emperor's] feet, and then goes to stand in the middle [of the *konsistōrion*], and, having given over the letter, speaks the greetings of his emperor.⁹³

The text takes no chances and details the ritual actions that the court demanded of the Sasanian envoy. According to the ritual protocol the Sasanian envoy performs *proskynēsis* three times as he nears the emperor's throne, the first two on purple porphyry inlays, the third time kissing the emperor's feet. We can gain an idea of the spectacle from Corippus's de-

scription of what the Avar envoys experienced at the same moment in an audience with Justin II:

They saw the tall men standing there, the golden shields, and looked up at the gold javelins as they glittered with their long iron tips and at the gilded helmet tops and red crests. They shuddered at the sight of the lances and cruel axes and saw the other wonders of the noble procession. . . . Their eyes range over the benches and the enthusiastic crowds and they lie down in adoration before the throne of the emperor.⁹⁴

Up to this point in the diplomatic ritual, the protocol has constructed the envoy and his men as representatives of a subject or submitting client king for the benefit of the imperial hierarchy and was likely intended to instill this sense into the envoys themselves. The experience would have been largely uniform at both courts. Both sovereigns wore purple or red footwear decorated with pearls, which were one of the preeminent markers of royalty in both realms.⁹⁵ In the sixth century, the Roman and the Persian court demanded *proskynēsis* from their own grandees, foreign legates, and client kings alike, essentially collapsing the ritual distinction between them.⁹⁶ The Roman gesture of *proskynēsis*, the ritual gesture of respect, had meaning in both realms. It is clear that the sovereigns mutually expected it from their counterpart's envoys and presented it to their internal audiences in at least a superficial show of dominance. Both courts employed veils and elaborate thrones to screen the sovereign from view and control access to his sacred presence.⁹⁷

At this point the tone of the ritual shifts startlingly from competitive to fraternal, which restored the equilibrium in the diplomatic reception ritual, shifting from a demonstration of dominance to an expression of cooperation. The two sovereigns constructed their empires and their dignity as equal through the familial term "brother," and in this moment, which was as close as the sovereigns would get to communicating directly, these fraternal terms and gestures predominate. The Roman emperor would then speak to the envoy as if he were an analogue of his master, saying: "How is our brother's health by the grace of God? We rejoice in his health"; and then go on to ask the envoy about anything that was currently at issue.⁹⁸ The envoy would then hand over the letter from his sovereign, which would be read, and the envoy would then answer for his sovereign.

We do not have nearly as much information on the urban experience that Ctesiphon offered, nor on the Sasanian throne room. However, from evidence available in Sasanian visual material and the secondary and tertiary sources, a number of parallels with the Roman court emerge, suggesting that

the Sasanian court cultivated an equally dramatic ritual and visual environment. Much as in the Roman court, the Sasanian diplomatic ritual bears marks of its origins in indigenous practices, which were brought into mutual conformity with the Roman practices through the unique process of exchange between the two realms. According to several passages in the *Šāhnāma*, which reflect an idealized remembrance of the late Sasanian court, Roman envoys would encounter many fantastic and even terrifying sights as they entered the palace. As they headed to the audience hall, the envoys would pass wild beasts symbolic of royalty, such as elephants or lions, tethered on golden chains.⁹⁹ Inside the palace grounds, the king of kings' courtiers and bodyguard shouted acclamations and were marshaled according to rank, displaying their weaponry and marks of office.¹⁰⁰ Like the Roman protocol, the *Šāhnāma* specifically mentions the courtiers' robes, which indicated their importance in the display. Whatever might have preceded it, the final approach to the Sasanian king of kings' palace (the *Ayvān* or *Ṭāq-e Kesrā*) would have made a profound visual impact, with the structure's enormous *ayvān* looming overhead (see fig. 27; map 3). Ṭabarī preserves the closest thing to an eyewitness account of the interior of the throne room in Ctesiphon when he relates the experience of the Muslim conquerors of the city. Apart from recording the great wealth that the invaders took, he records:

When Sa'd entered al-Madā'n [Ctesiphon], he saw that it was vacated. Finally, he came to the Great Hall of the king's palace. . . . He adopted the Great Hall as site for the prayer ritual. There were plaster statues there, of men and horses, but that did not prevent Sa'd, nor the other Muslims, (from praying there) and they were left as they were.¹⁰¹

We can fill in this very sparse description with analogous features from Kōsrow II's rock relief at Ṭāq-e Bostān, which, on the lower level of the rear face, depicts a high-relief image of the king of kings mounted, in full armor, with a nimbus surrounding his head, and holding a lance and shield (see figs. 28 and 29).¹⁰² Images of previous kings of kings or gods could also have covered the surfaces, either in vault or lower down on the wall, as Kōsrow II's rock relief and late Roman descriptions of the audience hall at Ādur-Gušnasp would suggest. Also cohering with this general description, many of the stucco revetment plaques excavated from the structure depict scenes of sublimated or overt combat, including images of the "royal hunter" or animals in battle. All of these images, which would line the Roman envoy's route to the audience and be linked with his experience of the king of kings, speak to the Sasanian sovereign's battlefield dominance and divine nature and express the potential harm he could do to the Roman emperor.



Figure 27. “*Ayvān*” or “*Tāq-e Kesrā*,” Ctesiphon. Audience hall of the Sasanian kings of kings, ca. mid-sixth century C.E. (Photo: J. Dieulafoy from M. Dieulafoy, *L’art antique de la Perse, Cinquième partie, Monuments parthes et sassanides* [Paris: Librairie des Imprimeries Réunies, 1889].)

Parallel to the protocol in the Roman throne room, the Sasanian king of kings concealed himself behind a veil until ready, and the Roman envoy would wait outside until bidden to enter by the master of ceremonies, ensuring an element of surprise in the envoy’s experience of the king of kings.¹⁰³ An honor guard surrounded the Sasanian sovereign, adding to the spectacle, and the Sasanian court often resorted to mechanical contrivances to augment the envoy’s awe. We know that Kōsrow I intended to receive Roman envoys in the throne room at the sanctuary of Ādur-Gušnasp, where through some mechanical system the king of kings could cause artificial thunder to sound and rain to fall.¹⁰⁴ Covered in jewels, gold, and silk, the king of kings would have been an exceptionally dazzling sight, and Roman aristocrats counted the opportunity to see him in glory as an enviable experience.¹⁰⁵ Several Islamic sources comment on the suspended crown of the Sasanian kings. The crowns that the kings wore during the ceremony were elaborate and immense to the point that they were too heavy for a human neck to support but, hanging from a golden chain over the king of kings, created an awe-inspiring portrait of a superhuman icon.¹⁰⁶

As far as we can reconstruct from the tertiary sources, as in the Roman protocol, the Sasanian diplomatic reception shifted from adversarial to fraternal in tone after the Roman envoy’s entrance. In some cases the fraternal nature of the reception extended farther than the Roman court allowed.



Figure 28. Large *ayvān* at Tāq-e Bostān. Monumental rock relief created by Kōsrow II, first half of seventh century C.E. (Photo by author.)

After entering and “touching his head to the exalted carpet,” the envoy would be invited by the king of kings to sit next to him.¹⁰⁷ According to the *Šāhnāma*, “the ambassador was then summoned into [the king of kings’] presence and given a place near the throne where all his story would be elicited from him.”¹⁰⁸ At this point, the king of kings interrogated the envoy in much the same manner as the Roman emperor did his envoy, treating him almost as an analogue of his master.¹⁰⁹ However, not surprisingly, this fraternal gesture had an ulterior, competitive aspect.

Kōsrow I used the seating arrangement in his throne room to express the social hierarchy of his realm. Distance from the ruler expressed distinctions between various social strata and marked out the king’s favorites from the rest.¹¹⁰ The members of each class would stand in a group a distance of ten spans apart from their social superiors, with further distinctions marked between those who stood on the left and right; a curtain separated the king from the court at large and marked his exalted status.¹¹¹ The

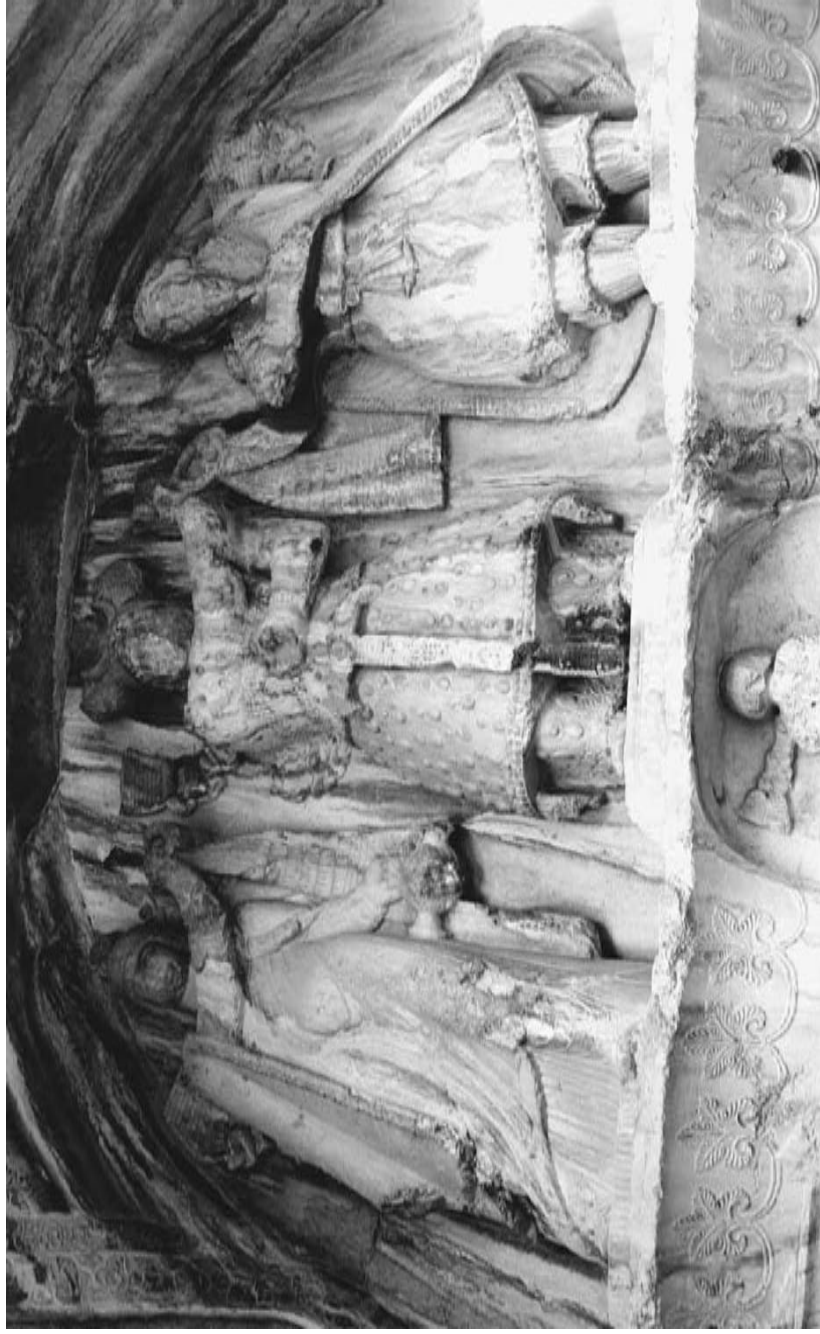


Figure 29. Kosrow II, given diadems by the gods Anāhid (*left*) and Ohrmazd. Detail of large *ayvān* at Tāq-e Bostān, early seventh century. (Photo by author.)

king of kings sat on a golden throne, while his courtiers and various vassal kings sat below him on chairs marking their status through placement or material.¹¹² If a courtier or vassal should fall into disfavor, the king of kings would remove the seat of the courtier or vassal from the throne room, effectively erasing his existence from the courtly hierarchy and making him socially invisible.¹¹³

Again, in a development of native practice, the king of kings appears to have also used the symbolic arrangement of golden chairs around his central throne to provide a tangible experience of the ideal world order according to the Sasanian royal imagination, creating from the chairs a ritual map of the known political world in his throne room:

In the collection of customs of the reception hall of [Kosrow I] Ānošervān was [one that dictated that], inside [the throne room], a golden chair was placed to the right of his throne [*taḳt*], and in this manner golden chairs were placed too to the left and to the rear, thus three chairs. One of the chairs was for the king of China, another was for the king of Rome, and the third was that of the Khazar [var. "Hephthalite"] king, so that when they came to his reception hall they could sit on the chairs. Year in and year out these three chairs stood, and they were not removed, and, but for these three, no other was allowed to sit on them. And in front of the throne there was a golden throne on which Bozorgmehr [Wuzurgmihr ī Bōxtagān, the *wuzurg framadār* or "vizier"] sat, and lower than that [chair] there was a chair of the chief *Mobed* and below that was a number of chairs for all the governors and nobles of the realm, and the place of each one was fixed so that no one would be able to make a dispute with another. And when Kosrow became angry with one, his chair was moved from the *Ayvān*.¹¹⁴

In an interesting parallel, when they sacked the royal palace in Ctesiphon, the Muslim conquerors found in the treasury of the king of kings what they understood to be the suits of chain mail and swords of a similar list of "subject" sovereigns, including Heraclius, the "Kāghān," and Dāhir (identified with a king of India); these were also augmented by the weapons of a number of would-be usurpers. It is possible that these were displayed, again for an internal audience, to define the king of kings as a universal monarch, even if in reality the last remaining Sasanian sovereigns were deferential to Heraclius.¹¹⁵

Although none of these sovereigns would ever visit the king of kings to occupy their golden seat (*korsī-ye zar*) next to his throne (*taḳt*), it is entirely likely that in the case of the Roman emperor, his envoy and analogue would. When the envoy visited Kosrow, his presence would temporarily rit-

ually animate this symbolic display, which otherwise silently occupied the throne room “year in and year out.” While at the Roman court, the envoy, and thus the ritual proxy of the Sasanian king of kings, stood in a subordinate position in the center of the *konsistōrion*, but the Sasanian king of kings placed the Roman envoy in an ideologically correct seat at his side. As in the Roman empire, such a display had a dual function. In terms of the realms’ interaction it was intended to instill in the envoy the king of kings’ conception of the subordinate place the envoy’s sovereign in a well-ordered world. On the other hand, such a display provided to his court physical, visual, and ritual evidence of his own world dominance. Throughout the rocky history of Roman-Sasanian relations, the king of kings likely removed the Roman emperor’s seat from the *ayvān* several times over; however, the removal would have been temporary and a display intended more for the internal audience, since even in times of war, regular exchanges announcing imperial accessions, births, and weddings still continued.

IN THE PRESENCE OF COSMIC KINGS

The late Roman and Sasanian audience halls were among the most politically powerful and ritually constrained spaces in the late antique world.¹¹⁶ The audience hall, as a potent symbolic and political space, enforced and displayed the sovereign’s social ideal, and its mores enforced and made the underlying ideas of this social ideal tangible.¹¹⁷ The high level of control in the audience hall did not happen without a great deal of effort and orchestration, however. At both courts a master of ceremonies informed the audience-seeker of what was expected of him, to ensure that the experience was precisely choreographed.¹¹⁸ When the master of ceremonies led the audience-seeker into the audience hall, he encountered a magnificent array of elements, including splendid clothing, impressive architecture, powerful music, and carefully prescribed ritual actions. Such elements not only impressed upon the participant the gravity of the event and the greatness of the sovereign but were tools to ensure that within this space every individual’s appearance, identity, and behavior, from emperor to servant, conformed to the dictates of the empire’s ideology and cosmology. In creating a “model of the way things are,” the ritual environment provided a more real experience of reality, because it presented, albeit in a fleeting form, a tangible enactment of the cosmos, where all celestial and political relationships conformed to Roman and Sasanian imperial ideals.¹¹⁹ In the words of Justin II’s court poet, Corippus,

the imperial palace with its officials is like Olympus. Everything is as bright, everything as well ordered in its numbers, as shining with light: just as the golden shining stars in the curving sky accomplish their courses poised on their own measure, number and weight, and remain firm in fixed retreat, and one light shines over all; all the stars yield to its superior flames and they feed on the fire of their monarch, by which they lie eclipsed. In this way the power of Rome over all that is great keeps itself over all kingdoms in the midst of the peoples, and shines, subject only to the clear sky.¹²⁰

Although those who participated did not always continue to act in conformity with this ideal, by enacting this microcosm before the court hierarchy, foreign visitors, and the populace within the audience hall, the sovereign could instill within all in attendance a practical experience of the world as it should be according to imperial eyes.

Accordingly, protocol at both courts demanded the participant in an audience temporarily surrender his own autonomy of action and speech and become himself an element in the ritual. An envoy was led into the presence of the king and, like all others in the king's presence, bidden to keep completely silent until commanded to speak. Even then he would reply only in a measured and formulaic manner. Forcing the envoy to relinquish his will instilled a somatic experience of the sovereign's power, showing it to be ubiquitous even to and through one's own body. Those reaching the presence of the king were required to cover their hands, and, in the case of the Sasanian court, their mouth; needless to say, one was forbidden to cough, sneeze, or spit.¹²¹ As well as establishing yet another barrier between the audience and the sovereign, these strictures paralleled those that were demanded when one came into the presence of a sacred object, such as Gospel lectionary in the case of the Christianity or a sacred fire in the case of Zoroastrianism. Such deference in the king's presence physically instantiated the assertion that the king's presence and body were holy. Even the sovereign's absence affected ritual practice. It was the custom in the late Sasanian empire to consider the audience hall of the king "just as sacred in his absence as in his presence," and all courtiers were expected to adhere to the same ritual strictures relating to speech, gestures, and immobility as when the king was holding court.¹²²

Many elements of the audience elicited emotional or instinctual responses. These emotional responses, once linked in temporal contiguity with the experience of other ritual elements, became a sort of ritual element in and of themselves. The veils behind which the rulers were concealed added an element of mystery and surprise and ensured that the royal presence en-

tered into the ritual environment only when all was fully ready.¹²³ The emperor's bodyguard with their fearsome weaponry added to the imposing spectacle.¹²⁴ Incense burning in braziers conveyed that one was not in a normal space.¹²⁵ In both courts the guards and courtiers kept strict silence, yet upon the appearance of the king, in the case of the Roman emperor, it is likely that an organ blast augmented the visual impact.¹²⁶ Artificial atmospheric effects, such as thunder, accompanied the appearance of the Sasanian emperor and were meant to awe the visitor.¹²⁷

When the veils were raised, the emperors appeared in a static, iconic pose, encased within their rich state robes and regalia, displaying no mundane human fidgeting. In the case of the Sasanian king, his huge ceremonial crown was suspended from the ceiling over his head because it was too heavy for a human neck to support.¹²⁸ A domed canopy covered the Roman emperor's throne, marking it as a holy place.¹²⁹ In terms of ritual practice, the climax of both audiences occurred when the audience-seeker reached the presence of the emperor and physically lowered himself to the ground, kissing it or part of the sovereign's clothing, such as a fold of the ruler's robe or his shoes.¹³⁰ Carpets decorated the floors in both courts, and in the Sasanian court the act of obeisance was known as "kissing the exalted carpet."¹³¹ In the Roman audience hall the series of porphyry disks were left exposed and guided the audience-seeker to his place.¹³² The reddish stone had taken on an almost mystical association with the emperor in late antiquity, and the audience-seeker would perform *proskynēsis* on the disks, which marked the ground as both holy and royal, though we also hear that envoys "brushed the carpets with their forehead" in the Roman court.¹³³ It is possible that the main envoy performed *adoratio* on the porphyry disk, while his retinue did so on the normally carpeted floor:

But when the curtain was drawn aside and the inner part was revealed, and when the hall of the gilded building flittered and Tergazis the Avar looked up at the head of the emperor shining with the holy diadem, he lay down three times in adoration and remained fixed to the ground.

The other Avars followed him in similar fear and fell on their faces, and brushed the carpets with their foreheads, and filled the spacious halls with their long hair and their imperial palace with their huge limbs.¹³⁴

Art, architecture, and technology asserted the emperor's central terrestrial position and his almost causal relationship to the rhythms of the heavens and, in the case of the audience hall at Ādur Gušnasp, meteorological phenomena.¹³⁵ Islamic sources preserve the memory of an enormous throne that Kōsrow II constructed in the vicinity of Ctesiphon, the *Tak̄t-e Tāqdis*.¹³⁶ According to the embellished remembrance of Tā'ālebi and the *Šāhnāma*,

the domed interior of the throne's baldachin, which covered the king of kings' place, displayed a lapis lazuli sky with the stars of the zodiac, the planets, seven *kišwarān*, and the sun and moon in precious metals and jewels.¹³⁷ This domed canopy rotated in concert with the movement of the heavens such that one could tell time by its movement, and creating the illusion that heaven and earth rotated around the king.¹³⁸ The dome also commented on the king's lineage and carried images of his Kayānid and Sasanian predecessors hunting and feasting.¹³⁹ The throne itself was thought to contain fragments from the "original" that Frēdōn constructed, the Kayānids embellished, and Alexander destroyed.¹⁴⁰ In addition to mimicking the movement of heavens, the throne's attributes and the king's place on it changed with the passage of the seasons. Tā'ālebi claims four jewel-encrusted carpets were alternately laid on the throne's lower surfaces, one for each season, while according to the *Šāhnāma* these carpets were changed every day of the month.¹⁴¹ According to Tā'ālebi the apex of the throne contained four seats, each corresponding to a season, so that the king, like the earth itself, could change his appearance and position according to the time of year.¹⁴² Though not directly related to the audience hall, the Roman emperor's appearance and activities at the Constantinopolitan hippodrome were similarly overlaid with cosmological imagery.¹⁴³

Images within the throne rooms played a special role in the diplomatic ritual-visual nexus. Like a physical act or an object, an image added a new semantic element to the ritual whole and had an impact on the nature of the event. However, images, especially in the late Roman empire, not only had the power to depict or call to mind the visual likeness of what they depicted, but also suggested its existential presence, be it an emperor or a divinity. Individuals who came into the presence of such images were expected to alter their behavior and attitude in acknowledgment of this. Justin II was responsible for building a new audience hall called the Chrysotriklinos in the Great Palace in Constantinople.¹⁴⁴ The octagonal hall's visual scheme, and its architectural form, reflected the developing Christian formulation of Roman imperial power.¹⁴⁵ In the central apse an image of Christ enthroned loomed over the imperial throne.¹⁴⁶ The clear, contiguous association between the two enthroned figures created by their vertical alignment and visual linkage implied (not too subtly) that there was a functional link between the two as well: the Roman emperor was the terrestrial representative, even the emanation, of the celestial King of Kings.¹⁴⁷ However, in the logic of the ritual environment, the human emperor participated in the nature of the divinity and inhabited both the practical and the existential place of the heavenly being.

Although we lack primary sources concerning the use of images in the audience hall of Kōsrow I at Ctesiphon, we can gain an idea of the possibilities through reports of an audience hall at Taḳt-e Solaymān during the time of his successor Kōsrow II (590–628). The elder Kōsrow favored Taḳt-e Solaymān, too, and planned to receive Justinian's envoys, Constantianus and Sergius, there while he was preparing to invade the Roman empire through Persarmenia.¹⁴⁸ Here, attached to the sanctuary of Ādur Gušnasp, one of the three great fires of ancient Iran, existing since the beginning of time, the Sasanian kings kept an audience hall, which, at least since the time of Kōsrow II, carried in its vault images of a royal figure enthroned and being served by celestial attendants. The description of this throne room is preserved in several (highly hostile) Byzantine historians:¹⁴⁹

Herakleios invaded Persia and set about destroying cities and overturning the fire temples. In one of these temples it was discovered that [Kōsrow II], making himself into a god, had put up his own picture on the ceiling, as if he were seated in heaven, and had fabricated stars, the sun and the moon, and angels standing round him, and a mechanism for producing thunder and rain whenever he so wished. Upon seeing this abomination, Herakleios threw it down and ground it into dust.¹⁵⁰

When [Heraclius] entered [the throne room] he found the foul image (*eidōlon*) of Kōsrow, and his image in the spherical roof of the palace as if he was enthroned in heaven. And around him were the sun and moon and stars, which the pagans worship as gods, and sceptor-bearing angels stood around him. There the enemy of God had contrived with machines there to sprinkle down rain like a thundershower and noise to clamor forth like thunder.¹⁵¹

These descriptions present two possibilities. A Roman eyewitness could easily have confused an image of the great god Ohrmazd for an image of the living Iranian king, since from the days of Ardašīr I to Kōsrow II Sasanian iconography consistently depicted the great god in the guise of a Sasanian king. If the image depicted Ohrmazd, then the effect would have been strikingly similar to that achieved in the Roman throne room: an image of the celestial order looming directly over the throne of the living king “metaphorically predicated” the identity of the sovereign who sat below. If, however, the image actually depicted the living king, for which there are parallels in other expressions of royal visual culture under Kōsrow II, it manifested his “true” cosmic identity—a god crowned by the great gods. The sculptural program of Kōsrow II's cut *ayvān* at Tāq-e Bostān which was likely used as an outdoor throne room within the king's hunting paradise, reflects these

Roman descriptions (fig. 28 and 29). Such functional relationships established between images and human actors, whether in the Roman or Sasanian throne room, could semantically alter the meaning of the ritual actions that occurred below. Through a metonymic association with the participants, images within the ritual environment forged metaphoric links with the sovereigns and the individuals who performed ritual acts in their presence. The images offered a visual comment on the identities of the individuals involved in the ritual and the cosmological import of the actions they carried out. Since the visual association established a functional equivalence between the sovereign and divinities, in ritually abasing oneself at the feet of these kings one offered submission not only to God's representative on earth but to the ritual embodiment of God—the one who inhabited his ritual place.

COMPETITION AND EXCHANGE IN COURT CEREMONIAL

The origin of the physical acts of obeisance that are part of court ceremonial—*proskynein*, *adorare*, *namāz burdan*, *dast kaš*—has remained a vexing problem in scholarly discourse, largely because of an over-reliance on Greek and Roman sources for evidence. In considering these acts, as well as the diadem, nimbus, and red footwear, we take up a problem discussed by Andreas Alföldi in his groundbreaking articles “Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells” (1934) and “Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser” (1935). Before Alföldi, scholarship understood commonalities between the two empires to be a marker of the “Orientalization” of the Roman court.¹⁵² Alföldi showed that “Persian” influence was a common rhetorical tool used to blacken the reputation of certain emperors, and proved that the core of Roman ritual and monarchic representation had indigenous roots.¹⁵³ Alföldi's articles, which largely approached the issue as a problem of cultural origins, deeply influenced later scholarship in both Roman and Iranian studies. Subsequent scholarship has often misunderstood Alföldi's conclusions to mean that there was no interchange or influence at all between the two realms or that the origin of an element of court culture determined its later meaning. Besides misunderstanding Alföldi's conclusions, this approach is too simplistic. In the process of refuting the false origins of many elements of Roman monarchical representation and analyzing their development in the Roman cultural realm, Alföldi discovered several parallels between late Roman and Sasanian court ceremony and insignia.¹⁵⁴ He speculated that these could have resulted from actual influence and interaction with Iran, but did not pursue them further.

The goal here is to give a more balanced developmental account of these practices and argue that the establishment of regular diplomatic exchange provided the impetus and means for exchange of court customs. I have identified a number of commonalities in Roman and Sasanian court practices and traditions of ruler representation that extend beyond those that Alföldi noticed, and approach them from a completely different point view. The fundamental significance of these commonalities in ritual and insignia, and the motivations behind their emergence, lie in their conversational function as cross-cultural mediators.¹⁵⁵ Both courts highlighted features such as full prostration or red, bejeweled shoes because they provided an intelligible focus for their struggle to exert dominance or establish parity and, as such, were useful mediators of ideas of power and legitimacy in a language of cross-cultural debate.

The Roman imperial court carefully orchestrated throne-room ceremonial to define and minutely express the relationship between the emperor and subjects and create tangible differences between ranks.¹⁵⁶ Despite sporadic assertions that it was “foreign,” the practice of genuflection, and later full prostration, was a relatively constant, though not initially institutionalized, feature of Roman imperial protocol. From the time of Julius Caesar on, Roman rulers required it from client kings and increasingly expected it from their own subjects.¹⁵⁷ From at least the time of Diocletian, the adoration of the purple *paludamentum* itself became the standard means of honoring both the office and the individual emperor.¹⁵⁸ This ritual practice (Lat. *adoratio*, Gr. *proskynēsis*) changed form several times from the third to seventh century, both in terms of who was allowed to perform it and the nature of the physical act itself. Under Diocletian in the third century the *adoratio purpureae* consisted of bending one’s knee. Kissing the emperor’s purple *paludamentum* was a privilege of only those of the highest rank, who were admitted to the emperor’s presence according to an *ordo dignitatum*—hierarchically.¹⁵⁹ All others of lower rank were allowed to perform *adoratio* in his presence, but without the kiss of the cloak, while the masses could only glimpse the emperor from afar, usually in a quickly moving procession. The nature of the practice was still fluid in the sixth century. According to Procopius, Justinian altered the ritual and required those of senatorial rank, like their social inferiors, to kiss the purple of his shoes rather than the cloak, thus leveling the social orders and further elevating the emperor.¹⁶⁰ Although many descriptions abound of Romans honoring the emperor with genuflection or prostration, Roman visual culture does not contain analogous images of Romans performing these practices. Conversely,

Roman triumphal art is replete with examples of subject or conquered barbarians physically abasing themselves in front of the Roman emperor.

From the time of Ardašīr I, the Sasanian court, too, had a clear protocol of gestures of respect. It did not, however, originally include any that resembled what Roman authors such as Lactantius or the SHA understood to be “Persian” *proskynēsis*. From evidence in Sasanian visual culture, the only ritual convention that existed in the early Sasanian court for showing obeisance or respect to royalty was the gesture of holding one’s hand in front of one’s face (*namāz burdan*).¹⁶¹ From the time of Ardašīr I, the gesture of the raised hand occurs regularly in Sasanian rock reliefs to denote respect or obeisance, either that of a noble to the king of kings or of a mortal to a god. With one discrete group of exceptions, there is no evidence from the Sasanian primary sources—including visual material—that genuflection or full prostration was part of any regularized or expected display of fealty or submission in Sasanian court culture.¹⁶² Prostration (*pad rōy obast*) appears only as an alternate gesture of respect and meaning for *namāz burdan*, in late Pahlavi- and Islamic-era texts, along with the gesture of placing one’s hands underneath one’s armpits (*dast kaš*) in the king of kings’ presence, which is supported also by late Sasanian visual evidence.¹⁶³

Although it runs contrary to much conventional wisdom in Roman and Byzantine scholarship, the available evidence suggests that in the context of Roman and Sasanian relations genuflection or prostration was originally a Roman custom, and the Sasanians appropriated these practices from the Romans to show submission and fealty, rather than vice versa. The first and only time that genuflection appears in Sasanian primary sources is Šāpūr I’s rock reliefs, which were heavily influenced by Roman craftsmen and specifically depict the Roman emperor performing this act. As discussed in chapter 4, Šāpūr I’s rock reliefs appropriated the Roman gesture of *adoratio/proskynēsis* to convey the idea that Roman emperor submitted to the king of kings. It is possible that the early Sasanians demanded the practice from their (actual) client kings, although there is no evidence for it. It is impossible to ascertain exactly when the Sasanian kings of kings adopted prostration as a gesture of fealty or respect in their own court because of a gap between the early primary sources, which refer to fourth-century events at the latest, and the later Roman and Islamic-era sources, which relate to the state of affairs in the sixth century and beyond. However, the process of exchange likely was tied up with the role that the gesture played in the Sasanians’ relationship with the Romans.

Prostration appears as an integral part of Sasanian court ritual, required

by the kings of kings from their own court hierarchy as well as from client kings, only much later, in late Pahlavi and early Islamic texts.¹⁶⁴ When it does appear, it appears in conjunction with the earlier hand gesture. A passage from Ṭabarī illustrates this when it describes how, even after he had been imprisoned, Kōsrow II received the court ritual due to the king of kings from a messenger:

[Aspād Gusnašp] pulled out a clean white linen kerchief from the sleeve, covered his face with it, and then approached [Kōsrow II]. As soon as he saw the latter, he prostrated himself before him; and when [Kōsrow II] bade him rise, he arose and showed reverence with the hand.¹⁶⁵

Given the lack of primary texts, and the fact that rock reliefs, our most important source of evidence for the early Sasanian period, fall out of vogue after the late fourth century, it is difficult to ascertain exactly when Sasanian courtiers began prostrating themselves before the king of kings in addition to performing the hand gesture. If evidence from late Pahlavi and Islamic sources is correct, late Sasanian sovereigns, like Roman emperors, expected both their client kings and courtiers to perform full prostration to show their submission and fealty.¹⁶⁶ As Justinian modified the performance of *proskynēsis* and demanded that all aristocrats kiss his feet, it is quite likely that Kōsrow I introduced *proskynēsis* into the Sasanian ritual protocol at this point, inspired by Justinian or perhaps in response to the demands on his envoys at the Roman court.¹⁶⁷ It would fit well with Kōsrow I's political reforms, which, much like those of Justinian, further elevated the figure of the sovereign above the nobles and centralized power around him.

At some point the practice became a regular component of diplomatic ritual. Images of Romans and Sasanians performing *adoratio/proskynēsis* in front of the rival sovereign multiplied after Šāpūr I, suggesting that the image had become politically charged and a site of competition. A likely point in time for this development would be after Galerius's victory and the concomitant stabilization of the two realms' relations, whereby diplomatic exchanges increased in number and regularity. With *adoratio/proskynēsis* now an institutionalized component of Roman protocol and with regular diplomatic exchange, it is logical that both courts harmonized what they expected from their opponent's envoy. At this point, the gesture became a cross-cultural mediator, that is it communicated between the two realms of ideas of hierarchy, respect, and power that both courts appreciated and exacted from their rival's envoys. By the sixth century, it is clear that both courts required full prostration from their counterpart's envoy, and the practice was regularized in their diplomatic exchange to the point of being called

the “customary obeisance.”¹⁶⁸ The evidence from Peter the Patrician indicates that Justinian expected the Sasanian envoy to perform the same type of *proskynēsis* as he now demanded from the Roman senators—that is, full prostration with a kiss of his feet.¹⁶⁹

Prostration is not the only feature of court ceremony that the two realms shared. By at least the sixth century, both courts concealed the sovereign behind a veil and demanded silence from all in his presence. Again, it is difficult to determine when these customs first appeared in the Roman empire. The veil and silence had several cultural precedents, mostly in a cultic context; however, by the Tetrarchy they were an established part of Roman court custom and continued largely unchanged under later emperors.¹⁷⁰ Information on these court customs in Sasanian Iran comes only from Islamic-era sources, such as Jāhīz and Mas‘ūdī.¹⁷¹ Again, the practice is documented much earlier in the Roman empire, and because of the problematic nature of the Sasanian sources it is impossible to ascertain when it appeared in Sasanian court culture. However, regardless of the temporal or cultural origin of these customs, the two courts’ diplomatic exchanges influenced the use of the customs, since neither court would have wanted to be at a disadvantage in terms of ensuring that its sovereign appeared with maximum impact.¹⁷² It is quite possible that the practice could have derived from indigenous developments that diplomatic contact harmonized, since by the sixth century it was an integral part of an envoy’s experience at the rival court. While the veil and silence did not carry the implicit statements of respect, fealty, or submission that prostration did, they performed the very practical function of controlling the environment around the sovereign and the more metaphysical function of commenting on his sacred nature.

8 City as Stage and Art as Statecraft

Every Roman and Sasanian embassy arrived bearing gifts and departed equally laden. Not merely an afterthought, gift exchange was arguably one of the most important elements in Roman and Sasanian diplomatic protocol. Gifts were a mainstay of Roman and Sasanian diplomatic exchange from at least the time of Constantine the Great and Šāpūr II and formed an integral part of all exchanges.¹

GIFT EXCHANGE

The gifts exchanged constituted powerful statements that both giver and receiver carefully weighed and to which the courts of both realms devoted considerable resources to produce and evaluate. According to Roman protocol, after the initial discussions, the envoy should say:

“Your brother sent you gifts and I pray you to accept them.” The emperor then gives permission for this. The envoy then retires with his entourage [to the *antikonsistōrion*], picks up the gifts and returns, himself bearing a robe [*pallin*], [a] precious decorated object [*kosmidin*], or some other such thing, while each of the others holds an example [of each gift given]. The interpreters should have prepared the [presents] in the *antikonsistōrion*, and all enter carrying something. They should all stand at the wall outside the veil opposite the throne, and when the veil is raised, they throw themselves to the ground, enter the door again, throw themselves to the ground, and do this three times.²

Up to this point the *magister* and the emperor have already given the envoy several gifts during his journey and initial stay in Constantinople. Here the gifting process is reversed, with the envoy acting in the place of his sov-

ereign. After performing *proskynēsis* three times to regain access to the emperor's sacred presence, the envoy resumes his role as the fraternal analogue and presents examples of his sovereign's gifts to the emperor. Once the envoy formally displayed the gifts, according to protocol, the emperor would ritually compliment them while "recalling favorably the emperor of the Persians and his health."³

After the envoy and his men display the gifts to the emperor, certain officials from the emperor's household subject the gifts to an even more thorough inspection to carefully evaluate their worth and meaning.

Then the *silentiarii* receive all the gifts, and they carefully bring them down to the sacred wardrobe (*vestosacra*) [in the order] according to the *magister's* list and deposit them there, where their appraisal takes place. The vestiaries (*vestosacrani*) must then communicate the value of the presents to the *magister* so that he knows what was brought, and when the time comes, he recalls this for the emperor when it is time for him to send gifts in return through his envoys.⁴

The practice of evaluating and recording the diplomatic gifts was standard practice by at least the mid-fourth century, and Eusebius mentions it as a part of Roman diplomatic protocol under Constantine the Great.⁵ The care the text gives to ensure the proper reception of gifts, and the amount of human resources the court devoted to appraise them correctly, make it clear that interpreting gifts properly was of utmost importance for the state.

Members of the emperor's household staff, called *vestosacrani* in Peter the Patrician's text but more commonly referred to as *vestitores*, were in charge of weighing and interpreting the monetary and symbolic value of the gifts to enable the emperor to formulate a suitable statement in return.⁶ This implies that at some level there was communication between this segment of the court hierarchy and any craftsmen engaged in imperial service to produce the gifts, and that the *vestosacrani* could have functioned as a conduit for the transmission of artistic motifs from one visual culture to the other. Thus these representatives of the emperor's staff likely played a role in choosing the correct visual statement from the repertoire of Roman imperial visual culture or in appropriating a particularly powerful or useful image to counter the symbolic content of diplomatic gifts from a rival sovereign.

On the surface diplomatic gifting was a thoughtful exchange only between equals, but diplomatic ritual and the related gifting process could be subject to several manipulations. For example, Theodora manipulated the protocol in her desire to elevate the position of the Roman empress.⁷ According to Malalas, Theodora attempted to create a parallel exchange be-

tween the Roman empress and (presumably) the chief of the Sasanian sovereign's wives, using the protocol that existed between the two sovereigns as a template.⁸ It is not known if Theodora's efforts were reciprocated; the lack of a clear counterpart for the Roman empress in the late Sasanian empire, and the sole testimony of Malalas, suggest that the exchange was short-lived. Theodora even reportedly tried to claim some of the courtesies that the two sovereigns shared. According to Procopius, she sent letters to Qobād I and demanded that the Sasanian envoys perform *proskynēsis* to her, too.⁹ Procopius reports that Kōsrow I scorned Theodora's attempts to elevate her position, and even used her overtures to calm a mutinying army, saying that a state evidently run by women was nothing to fear.¹⁰ Despite Procopius's outraged conservative sensibilities, it is likely that these were just informal or short-lived innovations, as we hear no more of this practice after Theodora's death. However, Theodora's letters and demand for *proskynēsis* show that any alteration of protocol could easily upset the careful ritual equilibrium that normally reigned between the two realms.

The objects the two courts gave as gifts were anything but simple, friendly tokens; rather, they represented complex statements to which the gifting court gave careful, and even methodically bureaucratic, attention, and it is clear that the receiving court as well took the gifts very seriously as well. The gifts took various forms, ranging from precious objects and textiles to large and exotic animals. No object survives that we know with certainty was given in a diplomatic exchange between the Roman and Sasanian courts, but royally sponsored portable luxury items, while likely not as splendid as the diplomatic gifts, offer some idea of the range of objects, imagery, and conversational possibilities in diplomatic gift exchange, if approached with caution.

Like other aspects of diplomatic ritual and discourse, the types of objects exchanged and the images they carried had indigenous roots and were adapted for a new, cross-cultural use. Portable and precious, like ivory and silk, silver plates with figurative imagery were probably one of the staple elements of diplomatic gift exchanges. Both realms distributed silver plates widely to their own subjects and client kings, and many of the surviving examples depicting the king of kings or the emperor belong to or imitate this category of object.¹¹ Silver plates had specific uses within the two empires, and the imagery they displayed reflected various trends in their visual cultures, from religious to secular; however, in a diplomatic context, the images on silver plates had a special significance that was relevant to the conversation between Rome and Iran. By at least the fourth century silver plates were understood to be one of the customary items exchanged between

the Sasanian king of kings and the Roman emperor. Although the events it portrays are fiction, diplomatic plates were common enough that the SHA interpreted such a plate as a portent of the emperor Aurelian's imperial future: "Furthermore when he had gone as envoy to the Persians, he was presented with a sacrificial saucer, of the kind that the king of the Persians is wont to present to the emperor, on which was engraved the Sun-god in the same attire in which he was worshipped in the very temple where the mother of Aurelian had been a priestess."¹²

Sublimated or actual combat, the hunt, or the sovereign enthroned in glory were the most common subject matter of silver plates. The Sasanian motif of the "royal hunter" was an exceptionally powerful, not to mention popular, image.¹³ A king hunting or engaging in heroic activity that involved an armed struggle with a beast or monster was an extremely old Near Eastern royal motif that appeared on seals, architectural sculpture, and even coins.¹⁴ Once established, this motif became the preeminent expression of Sasanian royal power and flourished in many genres, from monumental relief sculpture to stucco to silk and silver.¹⁵ The image of Šāpūr I's rhinoceros hunt at Rag-e Bībī, and Bahrām II's relief at Sar Mašhad, are two of the earliest Sasanian representations of the royal hunt. Bahrām II's relief depicts the king of kings defending his family from two lions whom he skillfully dispatches with a sword.¹⁶ The side relief panels of Kōsrow II's rock-cut *ayvān* at Tāq-e Bostān are the most extensive sculptural representations of the hunt, and the dynasty's last. On the right panel, mostly unfinished, the king of kings hunts deer in an enclosure with a bow. The left panel depicts the king of kings hunting boars from a boat in a marsh enclosed by netting, with many elephants beating the brush to flush out the animals. In the center the king faces the viewer after a successful hunt, with a nimbus prominent around his head, the visual representation of his *xwarrah*, which he had just reenlivened and displayed during the hunt. Stucco fragments from aristocratic structures in Mesopotamia and on the Iranian Plateau suggest that the hunt was a decorative theme that embellished Sasanian *ayvāns* in a palatial context.¹⁷

With special significance for Sasanian-Roman interaction, the majority of the surviving examples of the royal hunter motif occur on objects that played a central role in the diplomatic gifting process, most notably silks and silver plates.¹⁸ In a sense the portable material displayed to Roman eyes what the rock reliefs and architectural ornament monumentally proclaimed throughout Iran. These representations most often portray the king of kings as a mounted archer, although with some variation in his weaponry or mount. Although the image or idea of the Sasanian king hunting did not

refer specifically to the Roman emperor, its message of sublimated violence and battlefield prowess was an important element of Sasanian official ruler representation destined for foreign consumption. During the reign of Šāpūr II, the royal hunter became the standard image on Sasanian silver plates and remained a dominant image to the end of the dynasty.¹⁹ On these objects, the Sasanian kings of kings hunt a variety of beasts from relatively docile animals, like gazelles or rams, to ferocious creatures, like wild boars and lions. Some, especially the wild boar and the ram, carried additional divine symbolism. They were attributes of such divine entities as Warahrān (Av. Vərəθragna), the hypostasis of righteous violence and victory, and Xwarrah (Av. Xʷarənah-), divine royal fortune embodied.²⁰

Most of the royal hunters in silk imagery date to late in the dynasty's history and persisted in this medium in later Byzantine, Central Asian, and even Chinese and Japanese silks. Though the exact significance of the hunt is unclear, the images imply that the king of kings' activities somehow demonstrate or prove that he possesses divine qualities, the foremost of which was the victory-bringing *xwarrah*, as Kōsrow II's rock reliefs most readily demonstrate. In a secondary and somewhat contradictory significance, the slain animals represent the forces of chaos that the king of kings defeats. The images present a veiled threat to the king of kings' adversaries, including the Roman emperor, demonstrating the sovereign's military prowess and asserting that such a fate could befall any who defy him. In an extension of the hunt imagery, representations of animals such as boars, rams, or lions occurring by themselves often in an abstract and repetitive manner, were very popular ornamental elements in stucco, textiles, and silver. These images, as well as the imagery of the hunt, entered the visual culture of many of the Sasanians' client kings, as well as the repertoires of Central Asian silk workshops, and later their Islamic successors.

The Roman emperor hunted, though the imagery never came to be closely associated with him as it was with the Sasanian sovereign. The hunt played a noticeable role in Roman aulic culture and occurred in a wide variety of media, from sarcophagi to mosaics. Late Roman portrayals of the hunt descended from Greek, Hellenistic, and early imperial visual traditions.²¹ They enjoyed many royal precedents, reflected in Alexander the Great's mosaics at Pella and sculptural material from Hadrian's refurbishment of the base of Rome's colossal statue of Sol. However, with the rise in popularity of the images disseminated from the Sasanian court, images of the hunt in connection with specifically imperial representations or contexts increased markedly at Rome in the fourth century, in response to the impressive visual propaganda production of the Sasanian court.

Images of the hunt in late Roman imperial visual culture are divided between those representations that descend from native Greco-Roman visual traditions but were adapted to respond to Sasanian images, and a smaller group that appear to be a direct appropriation of Sasanian iconography. The arch of Constantine offers an example of the first group. The builders of the arch reused and conspicuously displayed two Hadrianic tondi depicting the hunt.²² Although the general pose and method of hunting is Roman, several details, either original to the Hadrianic tondi or added by the late antique appropriators, speak directly to Sasanian statements. One of the panels depicts the emperor hunting a wild boar, one of the most popular royal animals in the Sasanian tradition and symbolic of the god Warahrān (fig. 30). On another he stands over a dead lion, another animal common in Sasanian hunt scenes. The sculptors “updated” the imperial image by recarving the emperor’s facial features and added a nimbus around his head. The nimbus is most pronounced in the tondo that depicts the end of the hunt. The nimbus parallels, visually and politically, the many Sasanian representations of the hunt in which the king of kings’ divine royal glory manifests itself as nimbus around his head. Given the prominence of images of nimbed, mounted royal hunters in Sasanian silver, it is within the realm of possibility that Sasanian compositions inspired the reworking of the Hadrianic tondo portraying the emperor hunting wild boar that is incorporated in the arch of Constantine.

The sixth- and seventh-century Roman court responded to and even directly appropriated Sasanian imagery of the hunt, even in the very audience hall where the emperor received Persian envoys.²³ Sixth-century mosaics from the peristyle courtyard of the Augusteus include several fantastic hunting scenes, although none depict a figure in imperial regalia hunting.²⁴ Formally, most of the hunting scenes clearly descend from the Greco-Roman tradition.²⁵ Individuals on foot hunt tigers and leopards with swords and spears, and a horseman charges several gazelles with a lance. In one scene, however, a mounted archer turns in perfect “Parthian shot” and takes aim at a griffon who devours a deer. The image of a horseman turning to shoot over his left shoulder has venerable lineage in Iranian visual culture and military tactics alike and could have been included here as a result of Roman appropriation of either. In addition to adapting or redeploying images from their own visual culture, Roman emperors in the seventh century appropriated Sasanian-type images into their arsenal of imperial self-expression. Images of a hunter turning to release a Parthian shot occurs in several silks in characteristic “heraldic” or symmetrical compositions and continued to be very popular into the Middle Ages.²⁶ In very rare cases we encounter



Figure 30. Constantine the Great (r. 306–337) hunting boar. Detail of relief slab originally from a mid-second-century Hadrianic monument. Often assumed to be the work of later Medieval hands, the nimbus was most likely added when the head was reworked and the relief was incorporated into the arch of Constantine (312–315), Rome. (Photo by author.)

an emperor hunting in full regalia, though these images date to the seventh century at the earliest, and many occur after the fall of the Sasanian empire.²⁷

Several plates from the fourth century illuminate the type of visual interchange that could have occurred between rivals Constantius II and Šāpūr II. A plate now in the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery portrays what became the quintessential image of Sasanian kingship: the royal hunter.²⁸ The king's crown matches that of Šāpūr II, and his clothing and harness correspond to those current in the fourth century. The plate presents a somewhat compressed view of the action, with the sovereign mounted in full flying gallop with his diadem and various other decorative ribbons streaming out behind him while he draws his bow to take aim at his quarry. Two wild boars fall under his horse and before him, either wounded or dead. Containing a similar display of violence, a plate in the British Museum dated to the fourth century on the basis of stylistic details depicts a king with the crown of ei-

ther Šāpūr I or Šāpūr II who seizes a fleeing stag and plunges his sword between its shoulder blades.²⁹

The corresponding Roman material also continues this emphasis on sublimated combat and violence but conveys it in a different way. A silver plate found in the vicinity of Kerch (in the ancient Kingdom of Bosporos), on the north coast of the Black Sea, and now in the Hermitage Museum, depicts the mounted and haloed figure of Constantius II.³⁰ The plate portrays a military scene derived from the long tradition of Roman triumphal imagery, yet easily understandable to a Sasanian observer. In a visual expression of Constantius II's title "victor by land and sea," the emperor bears a lance and leads his troops to evident success, as he is crowned by a winged Victory—iconography that several later ivory and silver objects reinterpret and elaborate.³¹

These images of sublimated violence dominated Sasanian and Roman diplomatic plates through the sixth century. A plate now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York depicts a Sasanian king of kings with the crown of Qobād I (488–497/499–531) hunting rams (see fig. 31).³² A nimbus bordered by a row of beads surrounds his head. Qobād I's later counterpart, Justinian I, proclaims his victorious and inspired nature through similar visual motifs in a medallion that may have reflected imagery on contemporary diplomatic plates. The Barbarini ivory (see fig. 23) should also be mentioned because its imagery shows the emperor with many subject peoples, although it would not likely have been a gift for the Sasanian king of kings. Several late Roman plates, made in 629–630, portray the biblical king David locked in combat with an assortment of wild animals or Goliath (see fig. 32).³³ The plates in question come from the reign of Heraclius, whose poet, George of Psidia, used Davidic imagery several times in connection with the emperor's struggle against the Sasanians.³⁴ Although the plates do not depict an emperor directly, David's nimbus and actions are decidedly imperial. These plates offer interesting insights into a newly evolving Christian triumphal imagery that was inspired by and responded to Sasanian material. While it might have appealed to nonimperial aristocratic tastes, this imagery would certainly also have been useful in the two realms' competitive interactions.³⁵

Images of the sovereign enthroned or standing in semi-solitary glory supplemented the images of sublimated violence.³⁶ Like his representative's ritual actions, in the context of the diplomatic ritual, these images projected the sovereign into the throne-room ritual of the host. Although intended for a Roman official, the silver *missorium* of Theodosius I, often cited in studies of imperial visual culture, provides a useful example of an imperial



Figure 31. Silver plate portraying a Sasanian king of kings with the crown of Qobād I (488–497/499–531) hunting rams. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 34.33 / ARTstor.)

image that might have been presented on silver plates offered as diplomatic gifts (see fig. 33).³⁷ The plate presents a riveting image of the emperor and through its main figures a visual representation of the main concerns about which the envoys were interrogated: the emperor and his “everlasting offspring.” Scenes of a king of kings enthroned, often flanked by adoring courtiers, adorn a number of Sasanian luxury objects. As in the case of the royal hunter, the compositional and iconographic uniformity among silver plates, crystal, and rock reliefs indicates that the images emerged from centrally controlled courtly workshops. A late Sasanian crystal cup in the Bibliothèque Nationale (“Tasse de Salomon”) provides a prime Sasanian example; like the plate from Strelka, it portrays the Sasanian king in perfect



Figure 32. Silver plate portraying David slaying Goliath. The reverse contains the control stamps of the emperor Heraclius, who likely commissioned it to celebrate his victory over Kōsrow II in 628/29. Diameter: 49.4 cm. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.190.394–399 /ARTstor.)

control of the courtly environment (see fig. 34).³⁸ Possibly taken as booty from Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade, the object was a likely choice for a gift from a Sasanian king of kings to his Roman brother.³⁹ The concepts of sublimated violence and the king enthroned in transcendent glory were not always mutually exclusive. An ivory consular diptych of the consul Anicius Petronius Probus (406), now in the Cathedral treasury in Aosta, depicts the standing figure of the emperor Honorius. Like the Theodosian *missorium*, an arcuated lintel frames the emperor's diademed and nimbed head as he gazes transcendently into the distance. The emperor wears armor instead of the official imperial costume and holds weaponry in one leaf



Figure 33. Detail of *missorium* of Theodosius I, portraying the emperor (center) investing an official, and his sons. Silver plate issued to celebrate the imperial *decennalia* (January 388). Diameter: 74 cm. (Real Académia de la Historia, Madrid.)

and in the other the *labarum* and a globe surmounted by a winged Victory. The Sasanian king of kings' ever-present long sword also serves as a subtle reminder of the empire's armies awaiting the king's command.

The precious textiles (*pallin*) that the diplomatic protocol mentions served as important mediators of royal power for several reasons. Silk was an extremely precious commodity, certainly worth its weight in gold and a kingly gift par excellence. Beyond their monetary value, these silks likely carried figurative and ornamental imagery that participated in the two courts' exchange of competitive imagery.⁴⁰ Although a sizable corpus of late antique



Figure 34. Detail of a rock crystal medallion incorporated into a gold and cut-glass cup ("Tasse de Salomon"). Sasanian, ca. sixth century. (Paris BnF, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, inv. 379.)

textile fragments survives, largely preserved in the sands of Central Asia and Egypt and to a lesser extent in papal and Chinese tombs, almost without exception these fragments lack archaeological context or provenance.⁴¹ Carbon-14 dating, technical analysis, and simple comparative formal analysis can provide some indication of temporal and geographical origin, but the only evidence for textiles worn in the Roman and Sasanian courts that approaches the reliability of a primary source comes not from extant textiles but from representations of textiles in royal portraits in mosaic or rock relief.⁴² The extant textiles provide only supplementary information, in deference to the royal representations. Thus, while the available evidence is limited, it enables us to be more secure in the conclusions we draw.

The royal hunter and his quarry occupied an important place in late Sasanian visual culture, and in all likelihood its textiles.⁴³ Roman visual culture had several indigenous images of a battle between man and beast that could have served a similar purpose. Several late Roman silks depict a male figure, probably David or Samson, battling a lion, which is remarkably sim-

ilar to representations on the silver plates from the reign of Heraclius.⁴⁴ Like the silver and crystal material, textiles stemming from both cultures carry images of the emperor in glory combined with battle scenes. A pair of linen leggings found in Egypt, now divided between the textile museum in Lyon and the Louvre, depict a stylized image of a Sasanian king of kings observing a battle scene. These textiles, possibly of Yemeni or Sasanian-occupied Egyptian manufacture, portray Kosrow I's campaigns against the Yemenis and reflect the king of kings' conquests in the Arabian Peninsula.⁴⁵ While certainly not created in a Sasanian court workshop, let alone something exchanged, the leggings combine a familiar frontal image of the sovereign enthroned with visual evidence of his military prowess and could be a popular reflection of an imperial image.⁴⁶ The Egyptian materials and techniques, combined with the Sasanian imagery, suggest the intriguing and very likely scenario that these textiles were the product of an Egyptian workshop patronized by a soldier in the Sasanians' occupying force in Egypt. The embroidery from the Victoria and Albert Museum, which depicts a mounted emperor with a transcendent gaze leading two captives who are dressed in stylized Iranian costumes, has a similar effect.⁴⁷

PERFORMANCES OF POWER

After the gift exchange, the emperor would give his final brotherly commendations and dismiss the envoy, who would withdraw, performing *proskynēsis* at the same places.⁴⁸ The *magister* collected him at his office and then conducted him out of the palace grounds. Though the audience had ended, the large and small performances of power and the negotiation of the two realms' identities had only just begun. Following the formal audience, the court arranged several other meetings and entertainments of varying levels of formality.

During the other days [that the envoy is in the city] the envoy is summoned, and he discusses issues. And as the issues get resolved, [the emperor] permits the *magister* or other officials with him to speak outside with the envoy. If there is perfect friendship between the two states, the emperor should repeatedly send [officials] to watch over him and inquire [about how he is doing], as long as he remains [in the city]. He should also send to him an apportionment [of his meals], on our major holidays and those of his, and take care of him in various ways.⁴⁹

Though not detailed, this section of the text provides a useful interpretive context for references in several other sources relating to the activities with

which the sovereigns entertained the envoys of their rival. These activities included grand spectacles, banquets, and private entertainments. In most cases they took advantage of preexisting spaces and traditions, reinscribing on them an added significance relating to the two realms' interaction. In rare cases, the courts staged unique spectacles for the benefit of the visiting envoy. Given the length of time the envoys spent at each other's court, it is extremely likely that a foreign envoy witnessed most if not all of the most famous (or infamous) spectacles and architectural features in late Roman and Sasanian culture. Furthermore, it appears that the Roman court engineered a great many of them with the diplomatic audience as the primary target.

Ample and, in some cases, detailed, records exist of the general classes of activities that figured in Roman diplomatic entertainment and even several specially planned spectacles. We do not have similar evidence from the Sasanian realm, though texts relating to royal activities such as feasting, hunting, polo, and chess provide a rough idea of the possibilities in the Sasanian court. Through these examples it is possible reconstruct some of the other spectacles, entertainments, and activities that the Roman and Sasanian courts orchestrated and the messages of challenge or cooperation that they conveyed. In general, the Sasanians favored activities that demanded royal involvement and a display of prowess, such as archery, hunting, and polo, whereas the Romans favored the orchestration of mass spectacles, such as the hippodrome games or processions. Nevertheless, several parallels emerge from the evidence that indicate that the courts soon shared and even appropriated several practices.

THE HIPPODROME

The space and the activities of the hippodrome were central to displays of power in both cultures, either as an adaptation of indigenous customs in the case of the Romans or in outright appropriation in the case of the Sasanians. In Constantinople, the hippodrome was an especially important space for entertaining the Sasanian envoys, which is not surprising considering its vital role in Roman imperial performances of power in general. We have several vivid accounts of spectacles that the Roman court orchestrated in the hippodrome and performed with the Sasanian envoy in attendance. These ranged from the normal chariot races to displays of exotic animals or hunts of wild beasts to specially planned victory celebrations and even imperial accessions. The hippodrome reached the peak of its prominence un-

der Justinian I and Kōsrow I. Under Kōsrow I the Persians did not just witness the hippodrome activities but participated in them, and the hippodrome became a focal point for both sovereigns' competitive claims. As in other cases, the hippodrome ceremonies began as an indigenous practice, in this case Mediterranean in its development, and then took on an importance in the Sasanian empire and between the two realms because of their diplomatic interaction.

When Šāpūr III sent an embassy to Theodosius I announcing his accession, the Roman court staged a spectacle in the hippodrome in connection with the Persian embassy's visit, which Pactatus, Theodosius's panegyricist, clearly interpreted as a demonstration of the king of kings' subjection. I mentioned earlier that Pactatus claimed that Šāpūr III, "by sending an embassy, and offering gems and silks, and in addition by supplying triumphal animals for your chariots, although in name he is still your ally, in his veneration of you he is a tributary."⁵⁰ Theodosius I's hippodrome monument included a specifically universalist comment on the hippodrome games, portraying the emperor enthroned receiving the submission of Persian and Germanic envoys. Not only did the image portray the Sasanian empire as a lesser, subordinate power, an Eastern equivalent of the unruly northern tribes, but it was made even more acute by the presence of the envoys in the *kathisma* (see fig. 22). This particular side of the obelisk, on which the submission scene and the Greek inscription appeared, faced the demes and would have been invisible to the Persian envoys. The image would have functioned primarily as a commentary on what the people viewed across the hippodrome when they saw the emperor in the *kathisma* accompanied by Sasanian envoys or Sasanian gifts paraded in the hippodrome. The triumphal animals to which Pactatus refers may have been gifts of exotic animals for display or horses for the hippodrome's stables. In 473, the accession of emperor Leo II took place in the hippodrome in front of the army, the people, and "envoys, for there happened to be many there from several different peoples."⁵¹

The hippodrome played an especially important role in Kōsrow I's and Justinian I's diplomatic and competitive interactions. In Justinian's reign, the hippodrome's evolution into the supreme symbolic showcase for imperial victory celebrations was complete, and the elaborate, ritualized celebration of imperial victory in the hippodrome would have been an attractive spectacle for the Roman emperor to present to the representatives of the king of kings.⁵² Sasanian envoys attended carefully stage-managed events in the hippodrome, ranging from the chariot races to more unique activities, many times in the course of Justinian's reign. Games were held in the hippodrome on most of the major religious and secular holidays of

the type that Peter the Patrician recommends for feting the Sasanian envoy. As the average stay of a Sasanian embassy could extend to months, the Persian envoys would have had the opportunity to attend games multiple times during a single stay.

The visual and architectural environment of the hippodrome, not to mention the games themselves, was heavily laden with symbolism of imperial victory and portrayed the emperor as *kosmokratōr* of the microcosm of the hippodrome space. In addition to the general symbolism of the hippodrome, under Justinian specific elements included in the space reflected the emperor's mastery over the Sasanians and their position in the late Roman order of things. Justinian's equestrian statue in the hippodrome, for example, not only commemorated a victory at Dara, but articulated a potent statement of military dominance through its material, form, and inscription:

O Emperor, slayer of the Medes, these gifts does Eustathius, the father and son of thy Rome, bring unto thee: a steed for thy victory, a second Victory holding a wreath, and thyself seated on this steed that is as swift as the wind. May thy might, O Justinian, stand high, and may the defenders of the Medes and Scythians remain forever chained to the ground.

Bronze from the Assyrian spoils has fashioned, all at once, a steed, an emperor and Babylon destroyed. It is Justinian, and Julian [the praetorian prefect of the East], who bears the yoke of the East, has set him up as a witness to the slaying of the Medes.⁵³

The poetic, high-style Greek of the inscription addressed the aristocratic elite, but the statue itself would have presented a familiar and accessible image of imperial strength to all viewers. Mirroring Justinian's massive equestrian monument in the Augusteum, this smaller equestrian statue focused the hippodrome's generalized symbolism and imagery of victory on his military mastery over the Sasanians. In addition to its imagery, which likely included "Medes" and "Scythians" trampled or chained, the material from which the statue was made provided tangible proof of Justinian's dominance over the Sasanians, as it was taken as booty in battle.⁵⁴

Images that were centuries-old could be richly re-enlivened. The east face of Theodosius's obelisk continued to represent the Sasanian envoys as mere suppliants submitting to the emperor alongside their northern counterparts with the same potency as in its patron's time. The Blues and Greens microcosmically portrayed the emperor as a universal ruler by leading ritualized acclamations. Through their dress and appearance, classified with disdain as "Hunnish" and "Persian" by Procopius, these faction members stood in the place of the savage tribes and crafty barbarian enemies over which

God assured the emperor victory.⁵⁵ The ritual portrayed these foreign powers as appropriately subservient in the symbolic space of the hippodrome.⁵⁶ In Justinian's reign, the crowd would understand the presence of the Sasanian envoy in the context of imperial dominance as symbolized by Theodosius's statue, while the envoy would in turn understand the dress and actions of the circus factions in the same context and symbolic of his own status.⁵⁷

Besides these regular staged events, which followed the liturgical calendar of imperial and ecclesiastical celebrations, the Roman court staged special triumphal celebrations for the Sasanian envoys.⁵⁸ Foremost among these was Justinian's elaborate celebration of Belisarius's reconquest of Africa and capture of Gelimer, the king of the Vandals (summer 534). This event was one of the most magnificent spectacles that the city of Constantinople had ever witnessed. A contemporary source specifically mentions that the Sasanian envoy was present in the hippodrome to witness it, and it certainly was no accident that the event coincided with the presence of Persians in Constantinople.

And he [the Vandal king Gelimer] was taken away in company with Belisarius in the year twelve [534], and was publicly presented to the king in the circus before the people, with the treasure and his kinsmen and his magnates. And an ambassador of [Kosrow], king of the Persians, was there and was present and saw these things.⁵⁹

The event was ostensibly a triumph in honor of Belisarius in the tradition of the ancient Roman triumph—a ritual that Procopius was aware had not been celebrated by a Roman general for almost six hundred years.⁶⁰ While Justinian's triumph focused on celebrating the destruction of the Vandal kingdom and his mastery over Africa, the presence of the Sasanian king of kings' representative casts it as primarily a competitive statement directed at establishing Justinian as a universal sovereign and bolstering the frayed Roman reputation for military prowess in the eyes of his rival.

The elements of the triumphal parade that Procopius chose to accentuate, as well as the structure of the ritual itself, focus on symbolic objects and gestures that were closely related to lordship over several peoples and the emperor's powers of life and death over both the king and his victorious general—all important topics in Roman-Sasanian agonistic exchange. According to Procopius,

[Belisarius] displayed the spoils and slaves from the war in the midst of the city and led a procession which the Romans call a "triumph" not, however, in the ancient manner, but going on foot from his own house to the hippodrome and then again from the barriers until he reached

the place where the imperial throne is. And there was booty,—first of all, whatever articles are wont to be set apart for the royal service,—thrones of gold and carriages in which it is customary for a king's consort to ride, and much jewelry made of precious stones, and golden drinking cups, and all the other things which are useful for the royal table. And there was also silver weighing many thousands of talents and all the royal treasure amounting to an exceedingly great sum (for Gizeric had despoiled the Palatium in Rome . . .), and among these were the treasures of the Jews, which Titus, the son of Vespasian, together with certain others, had brought to Rome after the capture of Jerusalem. . . . And there were slaves in the triumph, among whom was Gelimer himself, wearing some sort of purple garment upon his shoulders, and all his family, and as many of the Vandals as were very tall and fair of body. And when Gelimer reached the hippodrome and saw the emperor sitting upon a lofty seat and the people standing on either side and realized as he looked about in what an evil plight he was, he neither wept nor cried out, but ceased not saying over in the words of the Hebrew scripture: "Vanities of vanities, all is vanity." And when he came before the emperor's seat, they stripped off the purple garment, and compelled him to fall prone on the ground and do obeisance to the Emperor Justinian. This also Belisarius did, as being a suppliant of the emperor along with him.⁶¹

The late antique victory parade that Justinian orchestrated was quite different from the triumph's ancient incarnation. The ritual reflected the formulation of imperial power current during the reign of Justinian and spoke to the Sasanian threat. The most notable feature was its central focus on the emperor, enthroned in the hippodrome, to whom the victorious general and defeated Vandal king alike proceeded on foot to render *proskynēsis* and await mercy.⁶² Before the eyes of Kōsrow I's envoy, Justinian ritually stripped Gelimer of the purple and received *proskynēsis* from the king, showing himself to be, in effect, a "king of kings." This event, so prominent among the cross-cultural displays of power, also casts a new light on the function of the Chalke Gate, under which Persian envoys would regularly pass. According to Procopius,

the whole ceiling [of the gate] boasts of its pictures, not having been fixed with wax melted and applied to the surface, but set with tiny cubes of stone beautifully coloured in all hues, which represent human figures and all other kinds of subjects. [. . .] On either side is war and battle, and many cities are being captured, some in Italy, some in Libya; and the Emperor Justinian is winning victories through his General Belisarius, and the General is returning to the Emperor, with his whole army intact, and he gives him spoils, both kings and kingdoms and

all things that are most prized among men. In the centre stand the Emperor and the Empress Theodora, both seeming to rejoice and to celebrate victories over both the King of the Vandals and the King of the Goths, who approach them as prisoners of war to be led into bondage.⁶³

The structure bore a visual enactment of the event and was the first thing that the Persian envoys saw as they entered the palace precincts. Indeed, with this in mind, it is would not be an overstatement to say that the gate's special place in diplomatic ritual likely governed Justinian's choice of mosaic program. Gazing up at the glittering tesserae as they were led through the gate, the Persian envoys were meant every time to experience how the Roman emperor had the power to take away kingship whenever he wished.

Although the Roman court tightly choreographed both the regular hippodrome games and unique victory displays, things did not always proceed according to plan, and the Sasanian sovereign's reaction to these displays was not always as hoped for. A particular instance of the Sasanian envoy's attendance at the hippodrome games stands out as a choreographed display of popular insubordination rather than imperial control. In May 557, Justinian entertained Yazd-Gusnašp at the hippodrome games celebrating Constantinople's foundation.⁶⁴ Malalas mentions this particular instance of a relatively common diplomatic practice because the envoy witnessed a massive uprising. Because of a bread shortage, the angry crowd, including some in "Persian" and "Hunnish" dress, began chanting ritual insults against the emperor instead of acclamations, before taking part in an all-out riot.

More vexing, perhaps, in terms of Roman diplomatic and military fortunes, the splendor of riches exhibited at Justinian's Vandal victory celebration evidently had a different impact on Kōsrow I than what Justinian had hoped to achieve in orchestrating the spectacle. Kōsrow I apparently learned of Justinian's successes in Africa through the envoy whom Ps.-Zacharias records, but rather than taking to heart Justinian's intended message, he sent back another embassy with a letter saying that "he rejoiced with the Emperor Justinian, and he asked with a laugh to receive his share of the spoils from Libya, on the ground that the emperor would never have been able to conquer in the war with the Vandals if the Persians had not been at peace with him"; Justinian was compelled to buy him off with a cash payment.⁶⁵

Although the Vandal victory spectacle did not cow the Sasanian king as Justinian had hoped, the symbolic power of Justinian's hippodrome performances deeply impacted Kōsrow I. In the following decades the king of kings appropriated the hippodrome rituals and even built a hippodrome for

himself in his capital. During his occupation of the city of Apamea following upon his sack of Antioch, K̲osrow I demonstrated that he understood Justinian's challenge, and offered a counterchallenge.

Being filled with a desire for popular applause, [K̲osrow I] commanded that the populace should go into the hippodrome and that the charioteers should hold their accustomed contests. And he himself went up there also, eager to be a spectator of the performances. And since he had heard long before that the Emperor Justinian was extraordinarily fond of the Venetus color which is blue, wishing to go against him there also, he was desirous of bringing about victory for the green.⁶⁶

When K̲osrow I mounted the kathisma of the hippodrome of Apamea to preside over the races and support the green faction, his action not only expressed simple rivalry with the emperor but asserted a serious challenge to the legitimacy of Justinian's rule.⁶⁷ The impact of the dissonance of an Iranian emperor in the symbolic and physical place of the Roman emperor was huge, and the challenge it communicated to Justinian was in some senses more terrifying than K̲osrow's military successes. Ironically, and in what appears to be a subtheme of these autocrats' attempts to ritually enact an ideal world, the games did not go as smoothly as K̲osrow had hoped, as Justinian's color took the lead out of the gates. K̲osrow, "thinking that this had been done purposely, was angry, and he cried out with a threat that the Caesar had wrongfully surpassed the others, and he commanded that the horses which were running in front should be held up, in order that from then on they might contend in the rear; and when this had been done just as he commanded then [K̲osrow I] and the green faction were accounted victorious."⁶⁸ In the logic of the ritual, K̲osrow I took the symbolic place of the Roman emperor and appropriated one of the primary victory rituals in the late Roman symbolic arsenal.

It should not seem an anomaly that a few years later,

[K̲osrow] built a city in Assyria in a place one day's journey distant from the city of Ctesiphon, and he named it the Antioch of [K̲osrow] and settled there all the captives from Antioch, constructing for them a bath and a hippodrome and providing that they should have free enjoyment of their other luxuries besides. For he brought with him charioteers and musicians both from Antioch and from the other Roman cities. Besides this he always provisioned these citizens of Antioch at public expense more carefully than in the fashion of captives, so as to be subordinate to no one of the magistrates, but to the king alone.⁶⁹

A variety of sources describe how K̲osrow built a hippodrome for himself near his palace in Ctesiphon.⁷⁰ Weh-andiög-husraw, "the Better Antioch of

Ḳosrow," also known as Rūmagān, which had a population of about 30,000 by the late sixth century, became a microcosmic Hrōmāyīg city, which was a living, ritual-visual monument to his victorious campaign, and a venue where the king of kings could ritually reenact this specific challenge to the emperor and perpetuate this appropriation.⁷¹ There Ḳosrow forcibly settled citizens of Antioch, taking care to provision his newly created hippodrome with charioteers, one of whom even plays a role in the story of St. Anastasios the Persian. As Procopius reports, in the saint's life, the charioteers depend directly on the king of kings for their salary, and his death threatens their livelihood.⁷² In a broader sense, Ḳosrow's enjoyment of the hippodrome indicates that the Persian king of kings had acquired Roman tastes. Although the hippodrome did not long outlast the sixth century, its constant reinvention as a victory monument specific to the Roman-Sasanian relationship is one of the most striking results of the intensive process of appropriation that unfolded during the thirty years of coexistence and constant competition between Justinian I and Ḳosrow I.⁷³

POWER PLAY: HUNTING, POLO, CHESS

In addition to staging lavish, public events, the two realms entertained their rival's envoys with a wide variety of more private royal leisure activities. Like the hippodrome games, these royal diversions presented many possibilities for competitive statements, which the sovereigns used to their advantage. Initially the two courts enjoyed a handful of activities in common, hunting being the most prominent. Generally speaking, however, the two courts' approaches to "sporting" and leisure activities differed. The Roman court hierarchy by and large preferred spectator sports and huge, organized spectacles, with hippodrome events being the most important of these. In contrast, Sasanian royal pastimes demanded the active participation of both the sovereign and his court, and an individual's performance in these activities could reflect his intrinsic power and worth.⁷⁴ A Persian nobleman's performance in the royal activities of archery, polo, chess, and hunting, for instance, marked him as "fortunate" in terms of both divine sanction and favor at court. Continuing a tradition reaching back to the Achaemenids whereby an Iranian sovereign would present his personal prowess as proof of his fitness to rule, the Sasanian kings of kings engaged in these activities in a ritualized and almost theatrically staged manner. Their achievements, real or merely idealized, were commemorated in various monumental and precious media, which were disseminated widely. Given this background and

the added significance of the diplomatic exchange between the two realms, royal activities were clearly more than mere entertainments. The reign of Theodosius II, who had Iranian advisors, was exceptionally important for establishing many of the common customs that diplomatic exchange often re-enlivened.⁷⁵

Hunting was an extremely important activity for both sovereigns, and most elements of it, from the weapons involved to the types of animals hunted, were laden with symbolism.⁷⁶ Hunting scenes and other agonistic displays of martial prowess reinforced the imagery on gifts that envoys received for their sovereigns. Although they did not invest as much institutional attention and resources in hunting as their Sasanian counterparts, Roman emperors had been avid hunters since the early empire, with Trajan and Hadrian standing out as particularly accomplished.⁷⁷ In the period under study, hunting continued to be a popular royal pastime, and one emperor, Theodosius II, even died from injuries sustained while hunting.⁷⁸ Roman emperors also kept hunting lodges in the vicinity of Constantinople, including the palace at Damatrys on the Asiatic coast, which was started by Tiberius II and finished by Maurice.⁷⁹

In the Sasanian empire, hunting was without question the preeminent royal pastime. The Sasanian kings of kings maintained hunting enclosures specially stocked with their favorite quarry and exotic animals at several sites within their empire, including Dastagerd, Tāq-e Bostān, and Qaṣr-e Šīrin.⁸⁰ The Romans understood the importance of these sites to Sasanian royal prestige; Heraclius targeted them for destruction during his invasion. Some kings bore hunting-related epithets—such as Narseh Naxčīrhgān (“the Hunter”) and Bahrām V Gor (“the Onager,” after his favorite quarry), and most choose to portray themselves as royal hunters in official propaganda.⁸¹ The “Master of the Hunt” and “Keeper of the Wild Boars” were important enough members of Šāpūr I’s court to warrant commemoration in his Ka’aba-ye Zardošt inscription.⁸² In several Pahlavi texts, the hunt joined other displays of martial prowess as a way both to prove one’s worth and to stand out for good or ill in front of the king of kings as one who had royal promise.⁸³ The descriptions of royal hunting parties in the *Šāhnāma* are suitably lavish, and our only detailed primary source for Sasanian hunting, the rock reliefs of Tāq-e Bostān, itself a hunting paradise, indicate that the astonishing descriptions in the *Šāhnāma* might not be so far-fetched.⁸⁴ The two side relief panels of Kōsrow II’s rock-cut *ayvān* at Tāq-e Bostān portray the king of kings hunting wild boar and deer and reflect the care Kōsrow II gave to hunting (see figs. 35 and 36). The panels demonstrate the prominence and symbolism not only of the hunt, but of everything involved

in it. The creation of this perfect paradisiacal space, the marshaling of human and animal resources (such as multiple elephants), and the inclusion of refined activities such as feasting and listening to music were a testimony to the sovereign's unique power. The quarry (here, boars) and the king of kings' prowess in wielding the bow reflect the sovereign's sacred identity (see fig. 37).⁸⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus offers a vivid description of one of Šāpūr II's enclosures, which he witnessed while on campaign with Julian:

In this same region [around Ctesiphon] there was also a large circular park enclosed by a fence, where wild animals were preserved for the king's enjoyment. There were lions with long manes, bristly wild boars, bears of the extraordinarily savage type peculiar to Persia, and other choice beasts of enormous size.⁸⁶

At the end of the dynasty, Theophanes preserves a description of a hunting enclosure that Kōsrow II maintained near a residence on the road from Hamadān to Ctesiphon.⁸⁷

If invited, diplomatic envoys participated in royal hunts, and, as the rival sovereign's representatives, they were expected to impress the host with their prowess. According to the *Šāhnāma*, "[w]hen [the king of kings] went hunting the ambassador accompanied him."⁸⁸ Claudian's panegyric of Stilicho bears out the *Šāhnāma*'s prescription. Claudian tells Stilicho:

Still young, you were sent to negotiate peace with Assyria [i.e., the Sasanians], to a youth it was entrusted to make a treaty with so great a people. . . . When they went hunting with you as their comrade, who before Stilicho stabbed the lions in close combat with his sword or transfixed the striped tigers from afar?⁸⁹

This passage praising Stilicho's hunt suggests that certain Roman envoys who had the youth and ability to rise to the challenge participated in this customary pastime of the Persian court. Indeed, hunting was so integral to Iranian diplomatic customs that refusing to take the envoy hunting was an insult.⁹⁰

While the hunt was preeminent, other royal pastimes, including polo (Mid. Pers. *čawgān* > Gr. *tzykanion*), chess (Mid. Pers. *čatrang* > Gr. *zatrikion*), and backgammon (Mid. Pers. *nēwardaxšīr*, Gr./Lat. *tabla*), also figured prominently in the courts' leisure activities and foreign relations, moving from one culture to the other through diplomatic activity or other high-level exchanges. As the names of these activities show, this movement was most often from the Iranian cultural sphere to Rome, through either direct or indirect avenues.

Reflecting an idealized late Sasanian court rather than third-century



Figure 35. King of kings hunting, left side panel, Tāq-e Bostān, large *ayvān*, seventh century. (Photo by author.)

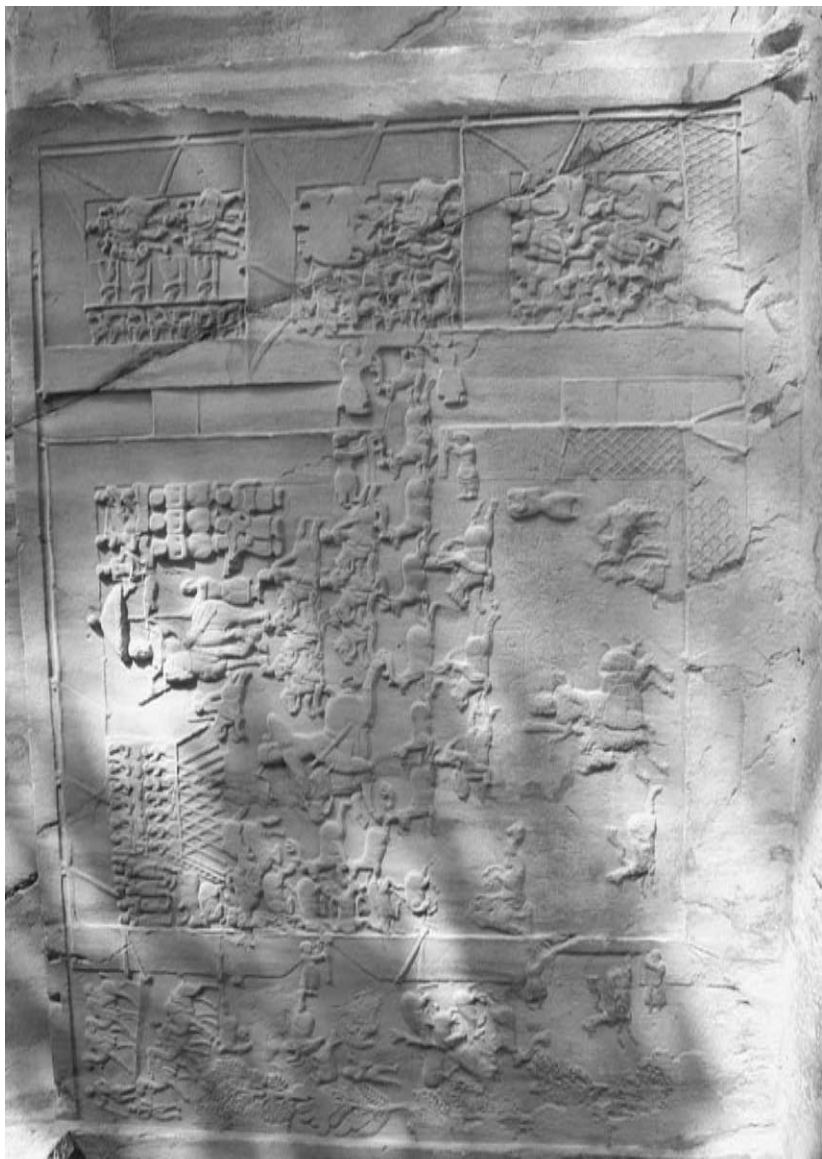


Figure 36. King of kings hunting, right side panel, Tāq-e Bostān, large *ayvān*, seventh century. (Photo by author.)



Figure 37. Detail of king of kings, left side panel, ʿTāq-e Bostān, large *ayvān*, seventh century. (Photo by author.)

practice, the *Kārnāmāg ī Ardašīr* shows how these activities could demonstrate a sovereign's fitness to rule, something an astute envoy would be on the lookout for, and which the court would be eager to prove. When Ardawān welcomed Ardašīr into his court and ordered that he receive an royal education,

he commanded that [Ardašīr] should go to the hunt and polo[-field] with his own children and courtiers. Ardašīr did this, [and] with the help of the gods, he proved to be triumphant and more adept than them all in polo, horsemanship, chess, and backgammon and all other knowledge.⁹¹

Polo was an important royal pastime in the Sasanian court and, like hunting, was an equally important element in the education of princes.⁹² Though not occupying the esteemed position it held in the Sasanian empire, polo became a popular royal leisure activity at the Roman court in Constantinople as well. Theodosius II constructed a polo-field on the grounds of the Great Palace, and it was aptly named the Tzykanistērion.⁹³ Given that Yazdegerd I was Theodosius II's guardian, and, more importantly, that many Sasanian officials sent from the Sasanian empire became prominent in his court, Theodosius's reign is the logical point of entry for polo into the Roman court.⁹⁴ Polo coheres well with Theodosius's noteworthy love of hunting and reflects the Iranian royal education that the emperor would have received from his Sasanian guardians, supplementing his Roman education.⁹⁵

Because polo at the late Roman court jarred with traditional conceptions of Roman court culture, some scholars speculated that it could not have been introduced until the eighth-century reign of another Theodosius, Theodosius III; but that is not likely, nor is there any evidence to support such a thesis.⁹⁶ Polo's introduction into the late Roman empire and the construction of the Great Palace's Tzykanistērion make more sense culturally and economically under Theodosius II than in the dark days of the eighth century and the brief and culturally barren reign of the usurper Theodosius III (715–717). This latter-day Theodosius was not a very refined or cosmopolitan individual, nor did his reign have much impact: a former tax collector in western Asia Minor, he is known only for his half-year siege of Constantinople, his iconodule politics, and his negotiations with the Bulgars before abdicating and becoming a bishop.⁹⁷ Indeed, during the Middle Byzantine period not only was the Tzykanistērion no longer used, but the land on which it had been located was actually built up with structures (*okēmata*), which Basil I had to clear to build his new imperial church, the Nea Ekklesia.⁹⁸ In comparison, the reign of Theodosius II enjoys a richly documented tradition of Persian influence, which later court chroniclers attempted to

cover up after many of the Iranian officials were overthrown in a palace revolution.⁹⁹ Given the limited, though still persistent, evidence for the game, it is likely that polo was a discretely royal pastime, and, much like the hippodrome games in Ctesiphon, its presence in Constantinople depended entirely on its popularity with the emperor and his inner circle.

Chess and backgammon played a celebrated part in Sasanian diplomatic relations with India and could possibly have entered Rome during this period, too, although there is less evidence for these activities than for polo.¹⁰⁰ According to the Pahlavi text *Wizārišn ī čātrang ud nihišn ī nēwardašīr* (The explanation of chess and the invention of backgammon), chess and backgammon originated in diplomatic interactions between Kōsrow I and a "great king of India," Dēvsāram. The vizier of the Indian king invented chess as a riddle and a sort of sublimated martial challenge for the Sasanian king of kings, sending it as a diplomatic gift with a letter that read: "As your name is the King of Kings, all your emperorship over us connotes that your wise men should be wiser than ours. Either you send us an explanation of this game of chess or send revenue and tribute to us."¹⁰¹ According to the account, Kōsrow I's wise vizier, Wuzurgmihr ī Bōxtagān, solved the riddle, invented backgammon and sent it in reply to the Indian king, who could not solve it and was forced to pay tribute.¹⁰² Although the story is fantastic, and both games were much older, the account neatly showcases the games' possibilities in diplomatic interaction.

It is not known whether the Roman court received chess as a gift from a Sasanian emperor during a diplomatic exchange of the sort that Peter the Patrician describes, or learned it in the Middle Ages from the Arabs. However, the Greek etymology of the word adheres more closely to a Middle Persian than to an Arabic precursor, and, in the ninth century, Arab authors noted that there were several differences between their version and the "Roman" version, which apparently predated their own.¹⁰³ Like hunting and polo, chess and backgammon figure prominently in Pahlavi accounts of an Iranian aristocrat's education, suggesting that one or the other or both were played at the court of the young Theodosius II.¹⁰⁴ Later evidence bears this out, as, by the late fifth century, the Sasanian game of backgammon (*nēwardaxšīr*) was an extraordinarily popular aristocratic pastime in the Roman court, supplanting earlier Roman board games.¹⁰⁵ Several epigrams of Agathias Scholasticus (527–567) mention *nēwardaxšīr*, and the longest even gives a clear, play-by-play account of the final roll of a game that the emperor Zeno (475–481) lost due to "blind chance."¹⁰⁶ In the late fifth, sixth, and even seventh centuries, backgammon contributed to the cultural common ground between the two courts and, like the hippodrome games, demonstrated how

the diplomatic process had caused the two realms to speak the same ludic and symbolic languages.

HOLIDAYS AND FEASTING

Royal banqueting and public celebrations associated with a sacred calendar or a royal wedding or birth, or just for their own sake also occupied an important position in the symbolic display of both courts. According to Peter the Patrician's protocol, the emperor "should also send to [the envoy] an apportionment [of his meals] on our major holidays and those of his and take care of him in various ways."¹⁰⁷ Although comprising just a few lines in this source, feasting was an extremely important means of expressing a competitive statement and impressing a rival. The mention of both Roman and Sasanian holidays indicates that the courts had a working knowledge of each other's festal calendar, and both the courts and the envoys were able to adapt to foreign customs.¹⁰⁸ Both empires used banquets for political spectacle, and, though originating indigenously, the protocol and various elements of the feast formed yet another common focus of competition, display, and debate. The attendance, seating, and dining arrangements represented, in a tangible form, the ideals and power relations of both courts' social world, and the emperor and king of kings thus integrated the envoy and his symbolic referent, the other sovereign, into this microcosm.

In the Roman empire, religious holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, and celebrations associated with the emperor's reign, such as accessions, anniversaries, and weddings, provided valuable chances to display the wealth and power of the court. The marriage celebrations of the emperor Maurice (582) provide a vivid picture of Constantinople during such a holiday:

The city celebrated for seven days and was garlanded with silver vessels: for there were deep platters, basins, cups, bowls, plates, and baskets: Roman wealth was poured forth, and a luxuriance of golden adornment, the mysteries of the household, provided a spectacle to feast the eyes of all who wished. Flutes, pipes, and lyres sounded, carefree and at the same time seductive; all day long numerous conjurers paraded their individual diversions before the eager spectators; actors who abuse whoever they wish presented their humorous plays with keenest rivalry as though in some serious business; chariot-races were performed, and the emperor entertained men of rank in the royal dwelling.¹⁰⁹

If present at court, the envoy would have joined these "men of rank" at the emperor's table "in the royal dwelling." Every element of the feast, from

the food to its presentation to the dishes in which it was served had strong symbolic possibilities. When relations were good, Sasanian envoys dined with the Roman emperor, reclining on couches in the ancient manner in the one of the Great Palace's *triclinia*, as did Yazd-Gušnasp with Justinian during his stay in Constantinople during a "Great Embassy."¹¹⁰

Roman envoys, too, witnessed displays of royal power in connection with Iranian festivals and at banquets held by the Sasanian king of kings. Although primary textual sources are few, Greek and New Persian sources and contemporary visual material provide a broad view of the possibilities of Sasanian revelry. According to the *Šāhnāma*, after the audience the king of kings "escorted [the envoy] to his palace in ambassadorial state, having provided for him all that he would need; and he invited him to table and wine, seating him near the throne."¹¹¹ While this reflected normal practice, when present during important Zoroastrian holidays, the envoy would likely have witnessed, and possibly have taken part in, the celebrations surrounding them.

The most important holidays in the Zoroastrian calendar were the Iranian New Year or *Nōg Rōz* (N. Pers. *Nowrūz*) and *Mihrīgān* (N. Pers. *Mehregān*), both of which involved elaborate feasting and public ceremonial. According to late Pahlavi texts and Islamic sources, during the six-day celebration of the Iranian New Year, governors brought the taxes from the provinces, new coinage was struck, temples were purified, and the king of kings received the realm's dignitaries and his family in a solemn audience where an elaborate gift-exchange would take place.¹¹² Like the coronation ceremony, this royal activity was understood to have originated with the primordial king Jamšed (Av. Yima).¹¹³ *Mihrīgān*, also of high importance, marked the beginning of winter. Also understood to have primeval roots, it celebrated the god Mihr (Av. Miθra) and commemorated the primordial hero Ɔraētaona's victory over Aži Dahāka, prefiguring the present sovereign's destruction of his enemies.¹¹⁴ If present during *Mihrīgān*, a Roman envoy would have witnessed the king of kings being ritually recrowned. The king of kings would distribute gifts and largesse from his treasury, offering another gifting opportunity involving the Roman envoy, while the envoy would take part in celebrations involving dancing, theatrical and military spectacles, wine drinking, and hunting.¹¹⁵

The Roman and Sasanian courts valued the rituals and symbolism of food and feasting for polemics as well as pleasure. Both courts cultivated refined culinary traditions and even came to enjoy similar dishes and dining practices.¹¹⁶ Members of both courts reclined while dining, and, as in the audience hall, at banquet one's proximity to the ruler was directly connected to one's social station.¹¹⁷ Wine was the most important beverage at both courts,

and at the Sasanian court the king of kings consumed wine with his courtiers and guests in ritualized parties (Mid. Pers. *bazm*, N. Pers. *bazm*).¹¹⁸ The various types of wine could represent the various provinces of the empire, which turned over their bounty to the emperor.¹¹⁹ The apportionment of food was symbolic, and being served from the emperor's own dishes was an especially high honor.¹²⁰ At a Sasanian banquet, a Roman envoy might hear a dinner speech extolling the celestial and earthly hierarchies, with the *šāhān šāh*, *pus ī wāspuhr*, *wuzurg framādār*, and other high courtiers praised in a parallel manner with the gods Ohrmazd, Mihr, Srōš, Rašn, and Warahrān.¹²¹ Both courts entertained dinner guests with music, dance, and clowning. At the late Sasanian court, a Roman envoy might be entertained by

the harp-player, the vina-player, the long-necked-lute player, and the Pandaeon flute-player and the cither-player and the lyre-player . . . and the hand-drum-player . . . [and] rope-dancing and chain-play and pole-climbing and snake-play and hoop-springing and arrow-play and cup-juggling and rope-walking and air-play, and the crimson tent and the red tent of sorcery, and pole-and-shield-play and armour-play and ball-play and javelin-play and dagger-play and club-play and bottle-juggling and monkey-play. . . . But with a beautiful harp-playing maiden in the harem—the excellent harp-playing maiden when her voice is high and her singing sweet fits best to that purpose—and with a vina-player at the great banquet no entertainment can compete.¹²²

At the Roman court, the Sasanian envoy might hear music from boy and girl choirs, flutes, lyres, zithers, and the ever-present organ. Female pantomimes remained popular even despite some Christian emperors' puritanical proscriptions.¹²³

Complementing the food and entertainments, even the silver and gold plate and the crystal goblets of the imperial banquet table participated in the wider celebration of the sovereign's power and achievements. Under Justinian I, the Roman court subjected the Sasanian envoys to a constant barrage of propaganda, which extended seamlessly to the imagery of the imperial table. Corippus describes the vessels used at an imperial banquet just after the death of Justinian and provides a picture of what Yazd-Gušnasp might have witnessed while reclining in the emperor's *triclinium*:

They placed golden platters on the purple tables, made even heavier with the weight of jewels. Justinian was depicted everywhere. . . . You would think the holy likenesses there were real, and were standing there alive. . . . Justinian himself had given orders for the story of his triumphs to be recorded on individual vessels of gold, at the time when in triumph he cast chains on captured tyrants.¹²⁴

The envoys' experience of Justinian's Vandal and Gothic victories at table would reinforce the spectacles that they witnessed in the hippodrome and at the Chalke Gate.

The *Šāhnāma* and a few other Islamic sources provide a perspective on the large number of extant luxury objects and insights into the visual environment of the Sasanian banquet. According to the sources, and as reflected in Sasanian sumptuary material, the kings of kings served wine in crystal, gold, or silver cups decorated with images of astral bodies, hunting, the king enthroned, or one of several *xwarrah*-manifesting animals.¹²⁵ The Sasanian king and his prowess in battle and at the hunt dominate the imagery. The rich repertoire of Sasanian silver would ensure that the king of kings and Sasanian royal glory would be broadly represented in the Roman envoy's experience of the Persian table. When Muslim soldiers looted the palace in Ctesiphon, the most impressive object taken was the *qitf*, also known as the *Bahār-e Kesrā* ("the Spring of Kōsrow"), a 30-meter-square silk carpet interwoven with gold and jewels and displaying images of flowers and well-watered cultivated lands with fruit and crops. While the carpet was an awe-inspiring spectacle in itself, it was reportedly intended to serve as a stage for drinking parties, providing the king and his court an artificial garden in the winter.¹²⁶

Like the audience hall, feasting presented a ritually controlled representation of society and as such provided an attractive space for the sovereign to express his disfavor or even mete out punishment. According to the *Buzandaran*, the Armenian commander in chief Mušel so impressed Šāpūr II with his chivalrous treatment of his captured wife and attendants that the Persian king of kings honored him at the royal *bazm* as if he were in attendance.¹²⁷ Alluding to the power of images on the royal silver and their role within the ritual, Šāpūr symbolically included Mušel in the *bazm* by ordering a silver cup to be made and placed before him that contained a portrait of the commander on horseback, and honoring it every time he drank.¹²⁸ For example, Roman generals who were helping Kōsrow II regain control of his kingdom from the usurper Bahrām Čobin witnessed a feast given by the Sasanian king that reflected the concerns of a wartime court on the march:

[After the battle] Chosroes feasted the Roman and Median leaders. When the dinner was already in progress, Bryzakios [the defeated general] was led in chains into the middle, with his nose and ears mutilated. After he had been the victim of the diners' jests, the king, as though favouring the banqueters with a memorable dinner-time spectacle, in an unspoken injunction commanded his attendant body-

guards with a gesture of the hand, and put this man to death: for it is not the custom of the Persians to speak while feasting. And so they stabbed Bryzakios and killed him as they had been ordered. Then after bloodshed too had been blended with the meal, Chosroes gave a concluding pleasure to those at table: for after drenching them with perfume, he wreathed them with flowery crowns, and ordered them to drink to victory. And so those who had been entertained at the banquet departed to their own tents, describing everything which had befallen them during the feast; and Bryzakios was the centerpiece of the articulation of their story.¹²⁹

While he was struggling for his throne, Kōsrow II used the symbolic spaces of the royal banquet to reassert symbolic control over his realm and demonstrated in not so subtle terms the benefits of aiding the rightful sovereign and the dangers of opposing him.¹³⁰ Also at a banquet, but using less violent means, Qobād I stripped a general of his royally bestowed marks of distinction for a military failure. Since elements such as diadems and belts marked one's rank at court functions such as feasts or wine drinking, the act rendered the individual socially invisible in the visual hierarchy.¹³¹

Roman and Sasanian diplomatic practice orchestrated a wide variety of rituals, spectacles, images, and activities in a complex process of competition and exchange. Diplomatic practice was the primary means of sovereign-to-sovereign communication and, as such, not only facilitated exchange between the Roman and Sasanian courts but also provided at least a partial impetus for the two courts to construct and enact many of their most powerful ritual and artistic statements. Like Justinian's victory celebrations, the Chalke mosaics, and Kōsrow I's throne-room arrangements, much of the art and ritual of the diplomatic process sought to enact an ideal vision of the world in front of the opposing sovereign's representative, sometimes even enfolded him into a carefully stage-managed experience of the "way the world should be."

The diplomatic process was both a venue for debate and an engine of exchange. From its beginnings in the late third and early fourth centuries, Sasanian-Roman diplomatic exchange ensured that each court was continually aware of the practices and images current in the court culture of the rival sovereign. Since negotiating and achieving the semblance of ritual and ideological parity were the focus of many of the diplomatic conventions, diplomatic exchange harmonized the two courts' throne-room ritual and gifting practices. In some cases diplomatic exchange facilitated the movement of practical or visual material from one court to the other: as a potent

venue for display, it presented a wide spectrum of threatening or useful ideological material for each realm to appropriate, incorporate, or respond to, as Kōsrow I's various appropriations of the hippodrome games most clearly illustrate. By the late sixth century, familiarity with the intricacies of the other's court culture was so complete that both courts even used that knowledge to "authentically" mint pretenders to the throne. The court of Maurice, for instance, replicated such authentic and impressive Sasanian royal regalia for the exiled Kōsrow II that it played a key role in winning converts to his cause.¹³² When Kōsrow II's own pretender, the pseudo-Maurice/Theodosius, was crowned in Ctesiphon in 603, the Nestorian *katholikos* of Ctesiphon performed the coronation "in the Roman manner," laying the crown on the altar first, blessing it, and then laying it on the head of the pretender.¹³³

The deeply engrained tradition of diplomatic gift exchange facilitated the movement of a massive amount of visual material between the two courts in a focused and controlled context. The protocol for receiving the gifts, and for appraising them, ensured that the courts understood both the gifts' import and their value. In the end, this process encouraged and intensified the two realms' cross-cultural conversation, which had begun in the mid-third century, and encouraged the development of a shared language with the result that, at the end of the sixth century, the two courts formulated ritual and visual expressions of power in a strikingly similar way and enjoyed some of the same activities, which is remarkable considering their nearly constant enmity.

9 The Late Antique *Kosmos* of Power

As a result of their diplomatic exchanges, the Roman and Sasanian courts began to display an increasingly similar visual culture of power beginning in the late third century. At the end of the sixth century and through the seventh century, one can even speak of a global sartorial language of legitimacy in which both participated, but which was located entirely in neither. With an equally long-lived impact on the Mediterranean, the Near East, and Central and South Asia, the phenomenon was manifest in a number of inter-related developments rather than a single monolithic process. Over the years, scholars have noted parallels between various late Roman and Sasanian ornamental motifs and, to a lesser extent, insignia, but have left the cultural processes that drove the phenomenon largely untouched.¹ The question remains, how and why did a global visual culture of kingship grow between the two empires in the sixth and seventh centuries?

A diverse group of objects and structures offer evidence of this phenomenon. Some of these visual elements, such as royal insignia, were almost legalistically determined within and between the two cultures. Others, such as ornamental motifs on textiles and architectural members, enjoyed more fluidity, with roundel patterns or symmetrical vegetal sprays, for instance, infusing the native objects or structures they graced with a global aristocratic splendor that complemented their native significance. The Sasanian and Roman producers and patrons of this material gracefully and seamlessly incorporated foreign motifs and associated ornamental patterns into preexisting “indigenous” forms.

Indicative of the processes that led to the emergence of a global aristocratic visual culture, the majority of the evidence comes directly from the highest echelons of the aristocracy and from the court centers. The appropriation of visual material was a deliberate endeavor and driven by a spirit

of competition between the two courts and, as far as the limited evidence will allow us to judge, within the two hierarchies themselves. This is not to say that the phenomenon manifested itself entirely and permanently at the Roman and Sasanian courtly apex. A much smaller and less unified body of late antique material—including domestic mosaics from fifth- and sixth-century Antioch, Sasanian seals and textiles, and glass and silver vessels that could originate in either empire—shows evidence of appropriation or, to a lesser extent, the convergence of tastes, but comes from a humbler social group.² After the Arabs destroyed and humbled the Sasanian and Roman empires, what had been almost exclusively restricted to the aristocracy in the sixth and seventh centuries became extremely widespread in the early Middle Ages (eighth through tenth century), appearing on a variety of architectural ornaments, textiles, and sumptuary material within, and soon beyond, the lands of Roman and Sasanian influence.³ This medieval explosion of popularity in the Mediterranean, Near East, and Central Asia certainly had just as much, if not more, to do with the power and prestige of the Umayyad caliphate than did the glorious precedent established by the two ancient powers.

INSIGNIA AS CROSS-CULTURAL MEDIATORS AND SITES OF COMPETITION

Beginning in the late third century, conventions of Roman and Sasanian ruler representation grew increasingly similar, involving the most basic visual and ritual markers of royalty, including the diadem, nimbus, and red shoes. By the end of the sixth century these common features of ruler representation were established and in full career. In both courts, nimbuses were standard visual motifs used to symbolize the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns' luminous royal power, and diadems and red bejeweled shoes were bound up with kingship. While we cannot track every change to this point with utmost certainty, similar to the developments in court ritual discussed previously, the convergence of these marks of distinction in the two realms appears to be an outcome of the growing intimacy fostered by diplomatic exchange.

In both cultures, the nimbus, diadem, and red footwear were essential to the visual expression of the idea of kingship. As these elements had native roots in both cultures, it makes most sense to concentrate on their cross-cultural significance rather than their absolute origin. At some point, as these indigenous practices became sites of competition between the two realms,

the courts began to endow them with a new, cross-cultural meaning, in their shared experience of each others' courts in the diplomatic process, in viewing their own images, or in investing their client kings. When it saw that an element such as a nimbus formed an important part of the rival sovereign's panoply, the court of the other realm drew a parallel with its own practices. These elements—nimbus, diadem, red footwear—followed a line of development that was similar to that of prostration or ceremonial silence, with initial experimentation in the third century and a slow regularization and harmonization in subsequent centuries. Yet, while prostration was part of official diplomatic protocol and diplomatic regulation fixed its usage between the courts, insignia remained on the cusp between "official," strict regulation and informal conventions.

Clothing and Hierarchy

Complex systems of symbolic capital animated both courts.⁴ Accoutrements such as silk robes and diadems and the ceremonies and banquets at which they were worn were significant because they reflected underlying power structures and cultural assumptions that were otherwise unarticulated. The Sasanian kings implemented sumptuary laws to impose visual distinctions among various classes of nobles and between nobles and common people.⁵ Silk clothes were a luxury supposedly available only to the nobility, and gold brocade on clothes was reserved for only the king and high nobility.⁶ The Sasanian kings also articulated distinctions within the upper echelon of society in the gifts they bestowed on their courtiers. The Sasanian king granted silk robes and jewelry to his courtiers to show his favor; these tokens were then worn in the king's presence.⁷ For example, Šāpūr II gave the Roman defector Antoninus honorific headgear along with a designated place at the royal banquet table and a seat in the council of the king to mark Antoninus's integration into the Sasanian court hierarchy.⁸ The king took away such marks of favor and distinction if a noble fell from grace. For instance, Procopius relates how, to mark his displeasure with a disgraced general, Qobād I stripped him of his diadem:

When the *mirranes* [title interpreted by Procopius as "patrician"] defeated in battle and with the greater part of his men lost, came back to the Persian land with the remainder of his army, he received bitter punishment at the hands of King Cabades. For he took away from him a decoration which he was accustomed to bind upon the hair of his head, and ornament wrought of gold and pearls. Now this is a great dignity among the Persians, second only to the kingly honor. For there

it is unlawful to wear a gold ring or girdle or brooch or anything else whatsoever except a man be counted worthy to do so by the king.⁹

Along with headgear, the belt (*kamar*) was also an extremely important mark of favor and integration into the Sasanian court hierarchy from the beginning of the dynasty to the end. The *mowbedān mowbed*, Kerdīr, recording his ascent to the top of the Sasanian priestly and social hierarchy in his Ka'ba-ye Zardošt inscription recounts that when Hormozd I raised him to the dignity of a noble, the king of kings invested him with a belt (*kamar*) and headgear (*kōlāf*) as the sartorial markers of his new social identity.¹⁰ Kōsrow II's Tāq-e Bostān reliefs carefully record belts with heavily jeweled pendants and plaques not only on the king, but also on the male members of his entourage, indicating their inclusion in his inner circle (see fig. 37).¹¹ The nobles themselves would take care to display these marks of distinction in their self-representations—for example, on their seal stones.¹²

The king's own appearance was extremely important, and coins, statues, rock reliefs, and textiles ensured that all segments of the population were familiar with it. Each king created his own crown, which was distinguished from those of his predecessors both by the divine attributes attached to it and by its color.¹³ Each king's dress, weapons, and jewelry were similarly distinctive, and no one was permitted to wear exactly the same outfit as the king.¹⁴ However, the king often bestowed high honor on family members and close associates by giving them his robes.¹⁵ The act of bestowing a diadem, which appears in Sasanian silver in several instances, thus marks the recipient's inclusion in the royal court hierarchy. The image of the great god Ohrmazd handing the royal diadem to a king carries a similar connotation, welcoming and placing the king in the divine court hierarchy.

Many of the Sasanian rock reliefs give visual expression to these ideals of social hierarchy, with nobles sitting or standing constellated around the always dominant position of the king. One of Šāpūr I's reliefs at Naqš-e Rajāb (I) depicts the king on horseback with his nobles ranged on foot behind him, as do his relief at Dārābgird and two at Bīšāpūr (III and II), which combine this theme with that of victory over the Romans and submission of other nations.¹⁶ Bahrām II carved two reliefs with the king standing or sitting at the center of the composition, with members of his family or courtiers adorning him.¹⁷ Šāpūr II's unfinished relief at Bīšāpūr (VI) depicts the king enthroned, with court and prisoners divided into quadrants around him. Where the surfaces are not abraded, Šāpūr I's relief at Naqš-e Rajāb (I) and Bahrām II's reliefs at Naqš-e Rostam (II) and Sarāb-e Bahrām carefully record the

various courtiers' clan signs (*nīṣān*) and their marks of distinction, including hats, diadems, swords, jewelry, silk clothing, and horse trappings.¹⁸

The color purple, which was created from an extremely expensive dye, became metonymically linked to the person and office of the emperor, and words derived from it proliferated.¹⁹ Under Diocletian the purple cloak, or *paludamentum*, which had originally designated a Roman field marshal, became the most important symbol of the emperor's office.²⁰ While more and more laws restricted (but did not outright bar) the use of the color purple for others than the emperor, an increasing number of imperial attributes became purple, including shoes, military standards, and even the ink used for the emperor's pen.²¹

Paralleling the centralization of the Roman world in late antiquity, its cultural, social, and sartorial marks of distinction centered increasingly on the emperor. Under Diocletian there was a marked change in society's perception of the outward symbols of rank and honor with the focus shifting to the imperially, rather than the aristocratically, sanctioned center. It was not that the older, mostly local forms of prestige and honor were outlawed or ceased immediately to exist; they simply ceased to matter. As a result, the only insignia that carried weight were those that indicated an individual's place within the empire-wide imperial hierarchy.²² As old Roman inscriptional and building practices of aristocratic honor and status gave way to a new centrally codified form, so did visual and sartorial marks of distinction. The image of the imperial official, and his insignia of rank and prestige, as in the Tetrarchic frescoes in the temple of Ammon at Luxor, for example, became more distinct and were codified and hierarchized with meaning imposed from above.²³ All officials were technically soldiers, and their uniforms were elaborated from military dress and accoutrements.²⁴ Officials could also be called *militēs*, and their service was known as *militia*.²⁵ Like soldiers, officials received rations (*annonae*) and a fodder allowance (*capitum*). An official's heavy military cloak (*chlamys*), his belt of office (*cingulum*), with its finely wrought and often highly decorated clasp, and the brightly colored patches (*segmenta*) sewn or embroidered on his tunic visually designated his service and rank.²⁶ These changes had lasting effects on the sartorial culture of Roman honor, such that even in the sixth century the head of an administrative office, a *princeps officii*, would carry a centurion's swagger stick as part of his insignia.²⁷

The Nimbus

The nimbus presents an intriguing case of a shared royal attribute. However, there is sparse evidence concerning its early development as a royal

marker, and a coherent account of this stage in its development in the Mediterranean, Near East, and Central Asia has never been written. I leave that larger task for a later work and here only intend to establish the facts at the beginning of the two realms' interaction.²⁸ For the first thirty or forty years of their coexistence, neither the Roman nor the Sasanian sovereign portrayed himself with a disk nimbus, that is, with a circle surrounding his head, although both experimented with other conventions of expressing royal luminescence, such as the rayed crown.²⁹ The raised wreath or bead border on the obverse of coins of several Hellenistic kings is visually reminiscent of the disk nimbus, and in several instances the border runs underneath the part of the king's portrait that strays over it, giving the impression that it is behind the king's head. Scholarship has not recognized this border as a nimbus per se, but it may represent a visual, though not religious-ideological, precursor for the emergence of the nimbus as a royal attribute.³⁰ Though the convention of the nimbus as a generalized divine attribute had existed for several centuries in Greek and Hellenistic art (including Central Asian Hellenism), the disk-shaped nimbus appears for the first time in Eurasia as a consistent royal attribute in the coins and statues of the Kušāns in the early second century.³¹ The Kušān rulers experimented with other visual means to represent their royal luminescence, such as flames rising from the sovereign's shoulders, but the nimbus eventually became the most popular means of expressing this.³²

Kušān royal imagery made a deep impression on South and Central Asian visual culture, and, along with other royal elements, the nimbus affected the repertoire of both Gandharan Buddhist art and the representations of later South Asian rulers, such as the Guptas. Several decades passed between the appearance of the Kušān imagery and the emergence of the nimbus in Roman and Sasanian art, during which time the disk nimbus continued to be an accepted and relatively common element of royal iconography among the Kušāns, who, it should be noted, controlled a nexus of trade routes that communicated with China, South Asia, and Iran, an effective means of disseminating their imagery.

In our earliest Sasanian visual evidence, rock reliefs and coins, the globe on top of the sovereign's crown and its theriomorphic or cosmic attributes are the only visual markers of a ruler's *xwarrah*.³³ After the late third century, the western part of the Kušān empire, roughly Afghanistan and western Pakistan, became a vassal kingdom whose prince-governors belonged to the Sasanian royal family, while another line of the "Great Kušāns" continued to rule independently for a while longer in Gandhara and the Indus Valley.³⁴ The Sasanian *Kušān šāhs* issued coins that initially continued many

aspects of Kušān ruler representation, including the nimbus, which suggests that this time period would be a logical entry point for the disk nimbus into Sasanian visual culture.³⁵ However, the Sasanians never represented their sovereign with the disk nimbus in coin portraits; it was not until the fifth century, and in a different medium, silver plate, that the nimbus made its first appearance in Sasanian art.

Between Rome and Iran, the nimbus appears as an attribute of a ruling sovereign first in the Roman empire in the late third century, an event that is somewhat counterintuitive given the cultural ties that the Sasanians shared with the Kušāns and the fact that Sasanians were in the process of incorporating the Kušāns' western lands into their empire at this point.³⁶ In the Roman empire, imagery of light or flame emanating from a sovereign's head occurs periodically in early literature, and there are three isolated instances of radiate nimbuses under the Severans, but the disk nimbus does not appear as a common, institutionalized visual attribute of a ruling emperor until Diocletian.³⁷ The "Lyon lead medallion," which is dated to the last decade of the third century, is the first object on which the disk nimbus appears, depicting the seated figures of Diocletian and Maximian, with circular raised forms encircling their heads, in its upper register.³⁸

Beyond a simple numismatic convention, from the Tetrarchy on, the nimbus became a prominent element of Roman ruler representation, appearing in diverse visual media from all over the empire and described in the imperial panegyric of several rulers. The frescoes from the cult room at Luxor show that this element of Roman official imagery was not confined to the numismatic realm but was also an important part of pictorial representations.³⁹ Beyond the visual arts, court panegyric includes descriptions of the Tetrarchic emperors' corporeal, divine light, and a court poet speaks to Maximian of "that light which surrounds your divine head with a shining orb" (*illa lux diuinum uerticem claro orbe complectens*).⁴⁰ With Christian sanctity substituted for Jovian, Constantine the Great established the nimbus as a standard feature of Roman ruler representation, continued by his sons and successors, and soon the motif was appropriated by Christian art.⁴¹ Besides appearing in coinage, the nimbus was a widespread element of Roman imperial iconography. It appeared in such imperial media as silver, including Constantius II's and Theodosius's silver vessels; ivory, such as the diptych of Probus; and mosaic, of which Justinian's San Vitale presbytery mosaic is the most striking extant example (see fig. 38). Emperors such as Justinian were especially attuned to the visual and existential parallels with nimbed Christian figures, yet the nimbus was always a solidly imperial attribute. As in the late third century, Roman panegyric of the late sixth century speaks



Figure 38. Emperor Justinian I, detail of the presbytery mosaic, north wall, church of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy. (Photo by author.)

of the ruler's light as if it were tangible, and not just a feature of the pictorial realm.⁴²

Like the Kušāns, the Sasanian kings experimented with imaging their own particular conception of the ancient Iranian concept of "royal glory" (Av. *Xʷarənah-*, Mid. Pers. *Xwarrah*)—the rightful *Airiia* ruler's luminous glory; and the disk nimbus was one such expression.⁴³ In the late fifth or early sixth century, Sasanian silver plates begin to portray the sovereign with a disk nimbus, suggesting that at some point around this time the Sasanian sovereigns began to represent their luminous royal glory with the

encircling round disk in addition to the *korymbos*, and by the beginning of the seventh century, Sasanian visual culture imaged both the king of kings and Zoroastrian divinities with the disk nimbus (figs. 31, 37, and 39).⁴⁴ Considering the strong Kušān precedents, prominent from the first century well into the fourth century, contemporary Gupta iconography, not to mention the explosion of the element in Roman imperial iconography beginning with the Tetrarchy, it would seem that the Sasanians appropriated the disk nimbus at least in the late fourth or early fifth century, when it was a truly cross-continental marker of royal power, with meaning from the Mediterranean to South Asia. It is perhaps telling that this form of the nimbus appears first in objects of the sort that participated in diplomatic gift exchange, and it is possible that the objects given in diplomatic gift exchanges encouraged the Sasanians to appropriate the nimbus from their Roman, Kušān, or even Gupta rivals. In doing so, the Sasanian sovereigns took control of the symbol of royalty deployed by their rivals to the east and west to communicate with them in a visually powerful language that that their rivals would understand. The nimbus continued to appear in silver plates (though not all) while spreading into royal representations in other media, such as rock reliefs.

By the sixth century the disk nimbus was an accepted motif for both rulers to convey ideas of divine kingship that were mutually intelligible, even though their specific “religious” interpretations of the nimbus’s sanctity differed. Although the light around the ruler’s head might come from different sources, visually these images of sovereignty spoke in a similar language of luminous royal fortune. In addition, both rulers took advantage of the visual correspondences between themselves and nimbed deities to show that they partook in some way in divine nature. Beyond the two sovereigns’ competitive interactions with each other, the nimbus captured and contended the same visual and ideological ground in the eyes of the client kings whose realms lay between Rome and Iran, such as the Laz, the Ghassanids, and the Lakhmids, and larger powers, like the Aksumite Ethiopians, Khazars, and Turks, whose favor and alliance the two rulers carried. In diplomatic gifts, the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns strove to establish themselves as visually participating in if not dominating these statements of global divine kingship.

Like the nimbus, the diadem became an important image of monarchical power and victory in both realms. Roman and Sasanian headgear obviously differed, yet there were some significant points of intersection, which, as in the case of the nimbus, provided an opportunity for mutual understanding and competition. Both sovereigns’ royal headgear derived indirectly



Figure 39. The god Warahrān bestowing a diadem, column capital from an unfinished complex at Bīsotūn, Iran, now kept in the Tāq-e Bostān precincts. (Photo by author.)

from the Hellenistic diadem (*diadēma*), a flat strip of white cloth tied around the head with the ends left loose and hanging. Alexander the Great made the diadem an element of his royal insignia, wearing it to symbolize his conquest of the Achaemenid empire and his status as *Basileus tēs Asias*.⁴⁵ The Diadochoi assumed the diadem in claiming to be heirs to Alexander's legacy, and thereafter the diadem became the preeminent symbol of inspired kingship and was worn by all Hellenistic kings, who ruled over lands as far apart as the Balkans and the Gangetic Plain.⁴⁶

Middle Iranian dynasties such as the Arsacids, the Śakas, and the Kušāns appropriated the diadem as a generic symbol of kingship from the Hellenistic dynasties they conquered.⁴⁷ Though rulers often combined it with other forms of royal headgear (such as the so-called Parthian tiara), the diadem

was a constant symbol of kingship in the Iranian cultural sphere. During this period, possibly because of the numerous petty kings who made up the Parthian empire, the diadem lost its significance as a marker of supreme kingship and came to signify other sorts of power or court office. In Parthian and Kušān visual culture, the king of kings would wear a superlatively long diadem in concert with other headgear to mark his dominant position and bestowed smaller diadems on his client kings or courtiers in scenes of investiture as a demonstration of their princely dignity or inclusion in the court hierarchy.

The Sasanians appropriated and continued the Parthian uses and significances of the diadem. In Sasanian royal costume, the size of the diadems increased exponentially, as did the number of diadem-like streamers that extended from the king of kings' feet, belt, and chest belts. Although the actual crowns of the Sasanian rulers featured many other elaborate elements, including divine symbols such as the solar globe or disk, mural crowns, rays, wings, and moons, the simple diadem with long, streaming ends remained the preeminent symbol of generic kingship, and in rock reliefs from Ardašīr I to Kōsrow II, the image of a deity bestowing the diadem upon a king was the ultimate statement of divine investiture.

Emerging from the Roman Republic's experience and appropriations of Hellenistic kingship, for much of its early history in the Roman empire the diadem was contested and controversial. Republican strongmen such as Pompey and Julius Caesar were attracted to the diadem because of its connection to the legacy of Alexander, but Augustus and his successors generally avoided it because of the negative, "Oriental" associations it carried for them from Rome's appraisals of the Hellenistic kings.⁴⁸ Instead, headgear derived from the republican victor's laurel crown became the normal marker of an Augustus.⁴⁹ In both Roman law and ritual practice, the emperor became perpetual victor, and such crowns were the normal gift of a winged Victory, in effect simultaneously reinvesting him and marking him as victor.⁵⁰ Gallienus is portrayed in the earliest official representation of a Roman emperor wearing the diadem; however, the image probably represents experimentation along the lines of his metaphorical adoptions of divine imagery, including the mythologized divine Alexander, rather than a permanent change in insignia.⁵¹ It is an isolated instance; subsequent emperors largely avoided the diadem until the early fourth century.

The diadem resurfaces in the second decade of the fourth century, this time as an example of the visual and ideological experimentation with the imperial image that a number of rival emperors carried out in their struggle for power and legitimacy after the dissolution of the Tetrarchy.⁵² Both Li-

cinus and Constantine the Great experimented with the diadem as well as with other visual attributes of charismatic kingship inspired by the Hellenistic kings.⁵³ Licinius's use of the diadem was limited; however, for Constantine—and all subsequent late Roman emperors—it was a permanent addition to the imperial image.⁵⁴ Constantine experimented with several different versions of the diadem, first adopting one relatively similar to those of the Hellenistic kings, then adding pearl and gem appliqués, and finally settling on one composed entirely of heavily decorated, jeweled segments with shorter, gold-beaded or jeweled ties rather than the long soft tassels.⁵⁵ Though the Hellenistic royal image clearly inspired Constantine's use of the diadem, as well as other elements such as his upturned gaze, contemporary sources make little mention of it, indicating that it soon came to signify simply Roman kingship.⁵⁶ The diadem became the standard royal headgear for Roman emperors thereafter, slowly becoming thicker and gaining additional elements, such as a large, jeweled plaques or a cross.

Apart from their indirect descent from the Hellenistic diadem, late Roman and Sasanian diadems were initially unrelated; however, the courts shared a common understanding of the symbolism of royal headgear as well the gestures relating to it, fostered no doubt through gift exchanges. The image of a divine agent, either a god or a divine emissary such as an eagle, a winged Victory, or an "*erōs*," presenting or crowning the ruler with the royal headgear was a potent and cross-culturally intelligible statement of divine favor and supernatural power. For both cultures, this divine recrowning was closely associated with the sovereign's military victories or, barring those, his innate or institutionalized victorious nature. Paralleling the two empires' burgeoning theologies of victory, in visual representations symbols of victory and symbols of rulership were clearly conflated. This conflation is especially evident in the imagery of Ardašīr I's and Šāpūr I's rock reliefs, where the kings of kings receive the diadem with their defeated enemies at their feet. Similarly, on his monument Galerius receives the laurel crown from the Jovian eagle precisely at the moment that he overthrows Narseh in single combat. In addition, in the mid-third and fourth centuries, several coin types express the Romans' institutional conviction that victory was the right of the emperor with winged victories, angels (depending on one's view of the extent of the Christianization of this figure), or the hand of God directly crowning the emperor.

In several instances the two realms even appropriated each other's "divine investors." Although Parthian winged Victories provide possible distant precedents, the winged being who crowns Šāpūr I in Bīšāpūr II and III was a motif taken from the Roman imperial repertoire and executed by Šā-

pūr I's Roman craftsmen. The hand of God that periodically crowns the Roman emperors in place of the traditional Roman figure of a Victory may have resulted from or responded to Sasanian influence, as there was a long tradition of divinities directly investing the king of kings. While the evidence for the appropriation of the hand of God motif is rather tenuous, the visual and textual evidence for the appropriation of divine investors in general under Kōsrow II in the late sixth/early seventh century is unquestionable. When Roman emperor Maurice backed Kōsrow II against the usurper Bahrām Čobin, he wisely accorded equal importance to the reinvigoration of the image of the king of kings' military power, knowing that a king must dominate his society's system of symbolic capital to establish power with an air of legitimacy. According to Theophylakt of Simokatta, in the spring of 591, along with soldiers and money, the Roman emperor Maurice,

sent to [Kōsrow II] . . . a gem studded belt, a royal crown [*tiaran basiliskēn*], and golden couches and tables; he organized a royal escort for him from his own guardsmen, and generously handed it over, lest he should appear contemptible to the Romans and Persians through lack of a kingly retinue. So [Kōsrow II] was encircled on every side by a royal bodyguard equal to that with which Romans are accustomed to honour imperial scepters.⁵⁷

These gifts had their intended effect, as we hear that later:

When the Medes saw the great strength lavished on [Kōsrow II] by the emperor, they changed their views, bade farewell to the tyranny, and came over to [Kōsrow II]. [Bahrām Čobin's] support weakened day by day, while for [Kōsrow II] events proceeded according to his wishes as his forces were swelled.⁵⁸

The effects of Maurice's donation on the Sasanian diadem and the use of the diadem to show victory visually are evident in Kōsrow II's rock-cut *ayvān* at Tāq-e Bostān and on the capitals of his unfinished complex at Bīsotūn. There is a marked change in the form of the diadem that Kōsrow II, Anāhīd, and Ohrmazd wear, as well as in the forms of those that the divine figures proffer to the king of kings, when compared to previous representations of the Sasanian diadem (see figs. 29 and 39). The diadems of the early Sasanian kings of kings were flat pieces of fabric or metal, occasionally with appliqué jewels or beads, and with long, streaming wavy ties. The diadems that appear on Kōsrow II's monuments preserve the long fabric ties from the traditional Sasanian diadems; however, the portion that encircles the head is composed of inlaid metal plaques joined with round jewel or precious metal segments. The closest analogue to this portion of the diadem is the Roman

diadem, of the sort that the emperor Maurice wears in his obverse coin portraits in combination with the crested *toupha* and likely gave to Kōsrow II.

In addition to the diadem, Kōsrow II's rock relief appropriates the Roman convention of the winged Victory who bestows the royal headgear. The Bisotūn capitals as well as the interior of the *ayvān* show the traditional Sasanian image of divine investiture, where various gods offer the king of kings the diadem. However, over either side of the *ayvān*'s archway two winged female figures stretch forth their arms and offer the same diadem, presumably in a symbolic gesture to the sovereign at the center of the upper rear register inside. This is an example of a subtle takeover of not only the victory itself but also one of the most common architectural settings for it—that is, in the spandrels of the Roman triumphal arch. Whereas Roman Victories normally carried laurel wreaths, the traditional symbol of victory that had been the model for the early Roman imperial crown, the Sasanian Victories carried the new composite Sasanian diadem, which for the Sasanians symbolized both victory and lordship, as in reality it was for the Romans.

Red Footwear

While the nimbus and the diadem were prominent elements of royal representation, the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns construed statements of global power and legitimacy in other more subtle details of royal dress as well. The privileged place of red footwear in both cultures demonstrates clearly how indigenous elements of royal insignia could take on an international valence. Its hard to overemphasize the significance of imperial footwear in the later Roman empire. In the Roman empire, only an emperor could wear red (or purple) footwear.⁵⁹ Despite solid Roman precedents, hostile sources claimed that bejeweled footwear made from expensive dyed silk and leather was yet another of Diocletian's additions to the imperial costume. While he certainly did not invent them, along with other elements of imperial regalia and ritual, the most critical reading of the evidence indicates that Diocletian converted them from an occasional affectation to a regular, expected, and even mystically charged element part of Roman court costume during the Tetrarchy. After the Tetrarchy, wearing red or purple footwear became tantamount to a statement of usurpation, equal to adopting the purple *paludamentum/chlamys*.⁶⁰ Other than the emperor, only the Mother of God and archangels were rountintely represented wearing them.

The only primary sources available on the Sasanian royal costume are rock reliefs and some seals. While these provide an idea of the shape of footwear, neither provide much information on its color.⁶¹ In rock reliefs of the

fourth and fifth centuries, the early Sasanian sovereigns wear what appear to be ankle-high shoes, tied with ribbons. This style changes in the late Sasanian empire, as demonstrated in Kōsrow II's relief, where the king of kings and Ohrmazd wear the same high, pearl-decorated boots, which are slightly obscured by their billowy trousers. These boots resemble Central Asian nomadic footwear and could have been adopted from the various tribes the Sasanians encountered from the fourth through sixth century. However, as a royal symbol, footwear evidently meant nothing until the Sasanian and Roman courts invested it with this meaning.⁶² A few Islamic sources comment on the color of the Sasanian kings of kings' clothing, Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī being the most notable and thorough.⁶³ Ḥamza summarizes a late Sasanian "Book of Portraits" that provided an illustration of each king of kings. While the early entries are surely fantastic, it is likely that the entries describing the late Sasanian kings of kings contain a kernel of truth. In any case, Ḥamza's description of Sasanian royal footwear coheres with all the late Roman sources: according to him, the shoes of all the Sasanian kings were red.⁶⁴

Red or purple, bejeweled footwear was an important institutionalized element of Roman imperial insignia from at least the time of Diocletian. It was not until much later, however, that such footwear became an important element of Roman and Sasanian Iran's cross-cultural interaction. At some point the Roman and Sasanian political understandings of footwear were harmonized: according to Procopius, who wrote in the sixth century, only the Roman and Persian emperors were permitted to wear red boots.⁶⁵ It is not clear exactly when this political meaning of dress became the accepted cross-cultural understanding, or, for that matter, whether the Sasanians were as strict in its application as the Romans. However, this mutual understanding of footwear likely emerged from the Roman and Sasanian empires' diplomatic interactions with each other and with their client kings in the late fifth and sixth centuries. Footwear is first mentioned as a cross-cultural mediator in 521/2 when Tzath, a ruler of the Laz, visited Constantinople to switch his and his people's allegiance from the Sasanian to the Roman sphere and to be baptized and reinvested by Justin I.⁶⁶ According to our sources, Tzath accepted a royal costume modeled after Roman imperial regalia as a part of his investiture but kept his own boots, which were red and pearl-studded according to the "Persian fashion."⁶⁷ These boots evidently made a big impression on the Roman court, considering the attention the sources pay to them. It is possible that this contact—or one similar to it—prompted the Roman court to begin to think of this aspect of the imperial insignia in an international sense. The next mention of these shoes occurs during Justinian's reign in Procopius's description of the regalia of the Armenian

satrap. These officials, like rulers of the Laz, came from a region between the Roman and Sasanian empires and wore a royal costume that consisted of sartorial elements largely of Roman inspiration, except for the boots, which “were of red color [lit. *phoinikon*, which can mean either red or purple] and reached to the knee, of the sort that only the Roman emperor and the Persian king are permitted to wear.”⁶⁸ Although he describes a time long past, Procopius asserts a contemporary understanding of royal insignia: the *Basileis tōn Rhōmaiōn te kai Persōn* wore purple or red footwear, and this was a politically significant fact. Such an observation suggests that sometime in the years intervening between the reign of Justinian and Procopius’s account the Romans, and perhaps the Sasanians, began to see political and visual similarities between their own and their rival’s insignia, especially in their quest for influence over the border states.

Does Procopius simply compare the Sasanian boots with traditional Roman imperial footwear (*campagi*, *caligae*), or does he signal that the Roman court actually appropriated the Sasanian insignia at some point? The Roman sources use several different words to refer to these boots. Malalas and the *Chronicon Paschale* use *tzaggion* to refer to Tzath’s Sasanian-style boots, while Procopius uses the generic *hypodēma* to refer to both the Roman and the Sasanian sovereign’s footwear.⁶⁹ Roman emperors of the late antique period appear in a variety of red and purple footwear, from the *caligae*, laced Roman military boots worn by the Tetrarchs in the Vatican porphyry columns, to *campagi militares*, worn by Constantius II in the Hermitage *largitio* bowl and the Venice Tetrarchs, to lion-mouthed *crepidae*, worn by Honorius in the diptych of Probus. In most representations of the emperor in his normal civilian costume, such as the San Vitale presbytery mosaic, the emperor wears the same footwear as the other Roman dignitaries, the patrician’s *campagi* (Gr. *kampagia*), except his are red and decorated with pearls and jewels (fig. 38).⁷⁰ In the San Vitale mosaic, Justinian’s purple leggings (*periskelides*), which covered the feet, appear underneath the red, jeweled straps of his imperial *campagi*, giving the impression that the purple of his feet “reached to the knee”; however, he certainly does not wear boots of the sort that Kōsrow II and Ohrmazd wear in Tāq-e Bostān (fig. 29).⁷¹

In light of the prominence of the red leather and pearls, Justin I or Justinian could have appropriated this aspect of the Persian *tzaggia*, which they saw when Tzath visited the court, but applied it to a style of footwear that was based on the *campagus*. Considering the differences and the solid lineage of the *campagi* as the footwear of Roman patricians, it is likely that Procopius noticed correspondences between the Roman emperor’s composite

footwear of purple leggings and red sandals and the Sasanian boots. At some point between this period and the early medieval era, when the emperors began to regularly depict themselves with red knee-high boots, the emperor adopted the *tzaggia* as part of his official costume. The adoption of the *tzaggia* probably occurred sometime during or after reign of Heraclius, who had wide-ranging access to Sasanian booty and court officials; however, there is not enough evidence to argue the dating conclusively.

More important than the actual cut and style of imperial footwear, however, is the convergence at this time of the two courts' understanding of their marks of distinction, and of certain aspects of their insignia. The Romans already recognized that red shoes were the sole right of the Roman emperor within their own culture, and as far as we can tell the Sasanian kings did as well. What are the context and motivations for these convergences? I have discussed the institution and effects of diplomatic exchange and gifting, and the sovereigns' images on the objects given certainly helped establish both familiarity and engagement with each other's systems of ruler representation. Diplomatic protocol would have had, in some ways, an even more direct effect: both the Roman and the Sasanian envoys would have been intimately acquainted with the footwear of their host, since they were forced to kiss it repeatedly while performing *proskynēsis* over the course of their stay. In addition, another process, besides diplomatic exchange, contributed to these and other convergences and provided yet another arena for competition: the investiture of client kings.

INVESTITURE AS A SITE OF COMPETITION

From the beginning of their interactions Roman and Sasanian sovereigns expected their clients to ritually prove their loyalty by visiting their courts for investiture. In late antiquity the client king's royal costume became a site of competition between the two realms as each sought to dress these rulers in their own image. Like religious conversion, royal costume was a visible way for a client to assert his inclusion in the Roman or Sasanian cultural sphere; thus the Roman and Sasanian rulers competed to present their sartorial system of honors and marks of distinction as the gold standard for legitimacy. Both states understood the power of gifts, especially gifts of regalia, to win loyalty or influence, and explicitly acknowledged this in heated exchanges and treaty negotiations regarding the right to give gifts to each other's allies.⁷²

As Tzath's story demonstrates, client rulers did not accept these gifts pas-

sively but shrewdly balanced the two cultures' marks of distinction to situate themselves sartorially in the most advantageous way possible *between* Rome and Iran. For example, although both cultures reserved red footwear for their sovereigns, client rulers like Tzath, and even the Armenian satraps, wore red boots, evidently as a result of Sasanian influence or investiture. The real issue was that such secondary insignia (as opposed to primary insignia such as the Roman purple *chlamys* or the Sasanian king of kings' personal crown) were only jealously guarded *within* the Roman and Sasanian empires. Each sought to craft the courts of these client states into microcosms of their own court. Tzath's move to the Roman sphere was not an isolated incident. Contemporary texts attest to shifting allegiances on the part of the client kings and client poaching on the part of the two sovereigns well into the seventh century. At one point in the sixth century, competition for the loyalty of client kings became so severe, and alliances with them so unstable, that the Sasanian king Qobād I was prompted to write to the Roman emperor Justin I: "It is crucial that we, who are brothers, speak to each other in friendship and not let these dogs make a laughing stock of us."⁷³ The "dog" Qobād I specifically had in mind was a *rhēx* (Lat. *rex*) of the Huns named Zilgibi, whom the Sasanian ruler thought he had won over from the Romans. When he discovered that his client was actually receiving honors and subsidies simultaneously from both states, Qobād I was infuriated, and humiliated, and so approached his rival, Justin, about joining forces against Zilgibi and other client kings.

GLOBAL ORNAMENT AND ROYAL IDENTITY IN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH CENTURIES

While both sovereigns put enormous effort into cultivating their appearance in person and in artistic representations and guarded access to the insignia, they also sought to control and contest a more subtle visual culture of prestige—that of ornament. Silk textiles, and the robes of honor into which they were made, articulated the hierarchies of both courts, with the gift of a robe marking one as a member with a specific place in the court hierarchy. Considering the power and violence that the courts invested in establishing and maintaining their hierarchies, the ornamental motifs that decorated these robes had great significance both within and between the two courts. Even in cases where the robes and associated imagery did not originate within either cultural realm, since the king's body controlled the visual and sartorial apex of the hierarchy, once incorporated into the imperial

wardrobe, they became as significant as the more highly defined, indigenous elements.

Justinian's San Vitale presbytery mosaic and Kōsrow II's rock-cut *ayvān* at Tāq-e Bostān provide the most detailed representations of the costumes of the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns and their courts extant today. The similarities between the ornamental motifs of the textiles worn by members of the two courts, as recorded in the mosaic and rock relief, are impressive. These features of Sasanian and Roman royal clothing played a unique role in defining power and kingship cross-culturally. Motifs such as the "medallion style," the *senmurv*, and even hybrid geometric patterns associated with Central Asian workshops became indicators of wealth and prestige.⁷⁴

Both sovereigns prominently and carefully displayed these motifs in their official representations. In doing so, they skillfully portrayed themselves as participating in and controlling an international system of symbolic capital. Rather than just incorporating these motifs wholesale, the sovereigns carefully integrated them with their indigenous sartorial modes of expressing prestige. In the San Vitale mosaic, Justinian displays silk decorated with a duck in pearl roundrel medallion pattern. He incorporates this global symbol of wealth and prestige into the shoulder appliqué of his white *tunica/divestēsion* and most notably into the *segmentum/tablion* of his purple *chlamys*, the metonymic symbol of Roman imperial power (see fig. 38). Similarly, the bas-relief representations of Kōsrow II at Tāq-e Bostān carefully portray the *senmurv* on his caftan (see fig. 40).⁷⁵ Both of these motifs, as well as most of the others included in these representations, were found incorporated in numerous images of aristocrats from as far afield as Sogdiana and the Tarim basin, and archaeologically in the sixth- to seventh-century Astana tombs and in the native clothing of a merchant from the eighth century, whose grave was excavated in the Caucasus.⁷⁶ Thus these motifs were in vogue in the larger late antique aristocratic world, but in contrast to their use in the two empires, which was rarer, they are not necessarily or exclusively used in a royal milieu.

This use and display of this imagery in silk textiles consumed by the courts converted it to a distinctly political symbol within the two hierarchies, and this symbolism had consequences for their later reuse in architectural ornament. All of these images—the winged Victory, the nimbus, and ornamental motifs such as the "bird in medallion" and *senmerv*—served as cross-cultural mediators, meaningful in both cultural environments and useful for conveying claims about the sovereigns between the two cultures. In this case, the motifs did not necessarily originate in one culture and move



Figure 40. Detail of the caftan of the royal horseman depicting *senmurs* in medallions framed by geometric motifs. Large

to the other; rather, the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns were often mutually engaged with a third phenomenon under the watchful eyes of their opponent.

At the same time that the Roman and Sasanian sartorial marks of distinction began to merge, the two realms' tastes in architectural ornament also began to show similarities. One medium has often been viewed as a conduit for these motifs into the other; however, considering the paucity of evidence, it makes more sense to view the developments in costume and architecture as parallel. Over the years, art historians have commented on the formal parallels between sixth- and seventh-century Roman and Sasanian ornament, and some more recent studies have refined our knowledge of these parallels; however, the unique role that ornament played in the two realms' interaction has remained elusive.⁷⁷ Given the Sasanian and Roman empires' four hundred years of interaction, it is no surprise that their visual cultures exhibit similarities. Where these parallels emerge, however, is of interest: they are found almost exclusively in material sponsored by and intended for those at the apex of the social hierarchy. In both realms the majority of the most important parallels are found in art and architecture sponsored by aristocrats or royalty. These parallels are to be found at such prominent sites as Galerius's palace in Thessaloniki; the churches of Hagios Polyeuktos, Saints Sergius and Bacchus, and Hagia Sophia in Constantinople; Šāpūr I's palace and rock reliefs at Bīšāpūr; the Ayyvān-e Kesrā in Ctesiphon; and Kōsrow II's foundations at Tāq-e Bostān and Bisotūn. At all these sites originally foreign material was incorporated into the larger fabric of Roman and Sasanian visual, architectonic, and ritual culture. By all indications, the patrons put a great deal of thought into the process and overall message of this appropriation, making the phenomenon of "global aristocratic ornament" an important tool in the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns' ideological and rhetorical arsenal.

The phenomenon of ornamental appropriation did not unfold according to a linear progression. Rather, the evidence suggests it occurred in several bursts, largely connected with the activities and aspirations of individual aristocrats and sovereigns. The first grouping of evidence is largely third-century Sasanian architectural material, with limited examples from the sumptuary arts. Šāpūr I's palace and rock reliefs at Bīšāpūr provide the majority of this evidence, supplement by some limited ornamental motifs in Galerius's mausoleum. However, this early cross-cultural movement of visual material was limited in scope and appears to be only as long-lived as the sovereign and events that directly encouraged it. By contrast, in the sixth and seventh centuries, ornament has a new, more important—and complicated—role. As a result of the normalized, even ritualized, relations that developed between

Constantinople and Ctesiphon, something approaching a common visual culture involving the aristocracies of both realms began to emerge. The quantity, prominence, and persistence of shared motifs in the sixth and seventh centuries dwarf what came before and suggest a cultural conversation of greater depth. In the sixth century the process of now mutual appropriation intensified to the point that by the end of the two empires' coexistence it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to discern unequivocally which ornamental motifs are Roman, which Sasanian, and which of other origin. To understand this complex phenomenon, it is necessary to take a methodological approach that is not interested merely in assigning absolute cultural origin, as has often been the goal of previous studies, but instead concentrates on what motivated it.

The emperors who drove the process were strictly interested in prestige, distinction, and, most importantly, the projection of power.⁷⁸ To be sure, ornament in late antique Roman and Sasanian art served various formal functions: it framed, filled, linked, or just pleasurably embellished a space; but one of its most important functions was to communicate political messages and articulate identities. Oleg Grabar defined ornament as a "necessary manner of compelling a relationship between objects or works of art and viewers and users"; yet it is also worthwhile to consider how ornament defined the patron's relationship with the structure or object with respect to his royal identity or social status.⁷⁹ The practice of appropriating the other culture's ornamental material, like the appropriation of its ritual and ideological material, helped define the sovereigns' relational identities and situate each in a larger *kosmos* of power. While royal attributes such as the nimbus or red footwear consisted of recognizable figural components and could communicate a direct and clear message to the viewer, ornament played a different role based on its relative abstraction and open-ended semiotic and symbolic possibilities and provided a level of allusion and flexibility that highly defined and even legislated imperial iconographies did not. The importance of ornament as a site of contention between the courts has not been adequately explored.

As the uneven distribution of the material suggests, the processes and practices by which ornamental motifs moved between cultures were not uniform, although what drove their movement—aristocratic taste—was. In some cases they were directly connected with craftsmen, who traveled between the courts voluntarily or were captured in war. The Bīšāpūr mosaics are the best example of this method of transmission, where Roman craftsmen working in a Roman medium produced largely traditional ornamental material in a Sasanian palace. In some cases the two realms' diplomatic

exchange had a direct impact on the phenomenon of global aristocratic ornament. The best documented example is the occurrence of late Roman marble and mosaic work in Kōsrow I's Ayyvān-e Kesrā, which resulted from one of Justinian's diplomatic gifts. According to Theophylakt Simokatta, "Justinian provided Chosroes son of Kabades with Greek marble, building experts, and craftsmen skilled in ceilings, and that a palace situated close to Ctesiphon was constructed for Chosroes with Roman expertise."⁸⁰ However, this simple model of the transfer of motifs through craftsmen does not apply in every case. In many cases, especially in the Roman material, craftsmen took foreign motifs normally present in one medium and incorporated them into an entirely different medium and context. The Roman craftsmen who incorporated Sasanian stucco ornament into the marble architectural ornament of Hagios Polyeuktos or textile ornament into the mosaics of Justinian I's Hagia Sophia provide a ready example of this phenomenon. The phenomenon reemerged in the sixth century, though with several noticeable differences. While Roman ornamental material occurred alongside more traditional Sasanian ornamental material at Bīšāpūr, and in the case of the stuccowork, was even translated into traditional media, in the sixth century this process of integration intensified. Foreign motifs occurred in some of the most important structures and monuments closely integrated with traditional motifs and media.

More to the point, evidence of ornamental appropriation is found on several different objects and structures that were important for expressing the sovereigns' power. Most of the ornamental appropriation in architecture occurred in the Roman empire during this period, with the churches of Hagios Polyeuktos and Hagia Sophia providing the bulk of the evidence, although limited evidence available from Ctesiphon, Bīsotūn, and Ṭāq-e Bostān suggests that it occurred in Iran as well. This may just be an accident of survival or excavation, considering how much Sasanian sacral and palatial material has been lost or improperly excavated; however, with respect to the history of late Roman/Byzantine art, this flowering of "Sasanizing" ornament was certainly a dominant and largely unprecedented feature of the age of Justinian and had a substantial influence on later developments. The subject deserves a full-length study of its own to deal in depth with the practical modes of exchange and the impact of these motifs on later Byzantine ornament. Here I will consider the phenomenon's significance in the broader context of Roman-Sasanian competitive interaction and royal identity formation.

Several conversations were part of the process of ornamental appropriation. First of all, the conversation between the two empires—that is, be-

tween the Roman and Sasanian sovereigns themselves—shaped both the nature of the appropriation and the possible meanings of the material in its new home. In this sense, structures such as Hagios Polyeuktos, Hagia Sophia, and the Ayyān-e Kesrā were rhetorical statements meant to make an impression and situate their patron within the *kosmos* of power. The two sovereigns also interacted with foreign ornamental material to situate themselves with respect to larger aristocratic cultures that were developing across Eurasia. The popularity of Central Asian silk and its ornamental motifs clearly illustrates this. Ornament also played a role in conversations that took place within the two empires—that is, between the sovereign and the upper echelon of the aristocracy. For example, in the heavily contested political environment of early and mid-sixth-century Constantinople several new and old dynastic lines strove to assert or reestablish their legitimacy. Certain ornamental motifs served as a subtle means to bolster imperial claims.

The church of Hagios Polyeuktos, for example, lay at the intersection of many conversations, and its ornamental program played an important role in the general polemical statement of the church's patroness, Anicia Juliana. Despite the fragmentary state of the architectural remains of Hagios Polyeuktos, three important aspects of its ornamental program have impressed many of those who have studied any of its scattered members: the abundant wealth and skill lavished on the architectural sculpture, the novelty of its ornamental program within the late Roman and Constantinopolitan architectural tradition, and its compelling similarities to the ornamental programs of structures built in Sasanian Iran.⁸¹ The field of late Roman and Byzantine art history is only beginning to fully integrate this structure and its ornament into its narrative. At times, its very existence seems to be a silent embarrassment to, or even negation of, several of the field's traditional assumptions about cultural influence and the development and function of ornament—assumptions that merit reexamination, and perhaps correction.⁸²

An examination of the three outstanding aspects of the church's ornamental program is in order here. The architectural ornament of H. Polyeuktos includes motifs that unquestionably derive from traditional Roman visual culture, such as grapevines, urns, peacocks, and stylized acanthus leaves.⁸³ However, a profusion of symmetrical and semi-vegetal geometric material, which parallels Sasanian material, appears alongside these more traditional motifs. It would take an extended, detailed study to catalogue the forms that make up these motifs; however, it can be observed that the vegetal motifs resemble late Byzantine acanthus but appear in symmetrical and geometric arrangements. Motifs such as the "pomegranate" and palmette,



Figure 41. Pilaster originally from Anicia Juliana's church of Hagios Polyeyktos (ca. 524–527), Constantinople, taken to Venice after the Fourth Crusade (one of the "Pilastrì Acritani"). (Photo by author.)



Figure 42. Detail of pilaster capital originally from Anicia Juliana's church of Hagios Polyeuktos (ca. 524–527), Constantinople. (Photo by author.)

which parallel the Sasanian material more closely, appear along the cornice of many of the fragments (see figs. 41 and 42).

A small portion of the ornamental material perhaps finds parallels in Sasanian silks; however, earlier and contemporary Sasanian stuccowork and the architectural ornament at Tāq-e Bostān provide the closest precursors for most of the material.⁸⁴ The mode of entry for these motifs into H. Polyeuktos's stonemason workshops and late Roman visual culture is not clear, although many previous studies have suggested they entered by way of textiles and the minor arts. Textiles certainly could have provided enough visual information for these elaborate reliefs, and minor arts could have provided useful three-dimensional precursors. However, taken as a whole, Sasanian sculptural material provides the most compelling precursors. Some motifs, such as the palmette and pomegranate friezes, articulate space on the H. Polyeuktos fragments in much the same way as they do on Sasanian structures. Others, such as the symmetrical vegetal and geometric motifs, do not find the close parallels in application that they do in form, other than matching the general tendency of Sasanian ornament to cover the surface of an architectural member. Considering the strong parallels between the

church's and Sasanian architectural ornament, the possibility that stonemasons or stuccoworkers trained in Iran worked on this structure is entirely likely, though ultimately we lack the evidence to prove this definitively.⁸⁵

The problem of H. Polyeuktos's unique ornament program and its similarities to Sasanian visual material has intrigued scholars for a century now, yet the motivations of the structure's patron to include the ornament in the structure, and the sociopolitical implications of the ornament, remain largely unexamined.⁸⁶ Older scholarship understood ornamental traditions as developments within their own "genetic pool," and so considered the development of H. Polyeuktos's program outside late Roman ornamental genealogy aberrant. Thus previous studies looked to modes of transmission that assumed that the patron neither understood the nature of the ornament nor had a motive that would account for the patron's active appropriation of it. Cyril Mango's 1977 essay was noteworthy because for a long time it represented the only attempt to provide an interpretation of the function of the Sasanian material. Mango made the important observation that the use of these motifs is confined to the highest aristocracy and upper circles of the imperial hierarchy.⁸⁷

H. Polyeuktos' architectural ornament is unique when compared to Roman architecture at large, including that found in Eastern regions, such as Syria. The appearance of Sasanian ornament seemingly out of the blue in the capital rather than in one of the provinces that was in closer contact with the Sasanian empire suggests that it represents the will and tastes of its patron rather than an "organic development" or passive absorption. To understand the motives and overall statement of the patron of the ornamental program, we must examine her background and the domestic and international political milieu in which the church was built. Previous studies have examined the impressive imperial lineage and pretensions of H. Polyeuktos's patroness, but certain aspects deserve mention here.⁸⁸ Anicia Juliana was born in Constantinople ca. 462/3, the daughter of Flavius Anicius Olybrius, emperor of the West for eight months in 472, and of Placidia, the daughter of Valentinian III.⁸⁹ Anicia Juliana was the great-granddaughter of Eudocia and Theodosius II, and a descendant of Theodosius I.⁹⁰ She remained in Constantinople when her father took up his office in Italy, and appeared to have lived in the metropolis for most of her life.⁹¹ The emperor Zeno offered Juliana to King Theodoric (479), but the marriage did not take place; however, later she married Flavius Areobindus Dagalaiphus, a Romanized Goth who held several offices, including *Magister Militum per Orientem* (503–504/5) and consul (506).⁹² Several studies have pointed out the of-

fense the events of 512 might have caused to Anicia Juliana's sense of entitlement, and even sanity.⁹³ In 512 the Orthodox population of the Constantinople, in revolt against the Monophysite Anastasius, tried to acclaim Areobindus as emperor, a challenge from which he fled. After Anastasius's death the palace guard acclaimed Justin, passing over Juliana's son Olybrius.

While most scholars would grant that an ostentatious display of wealth and lineage was an end in and of itself for Anicia Juliana, agreement on the precise polemical message this enormous project was intended to convey and how she expected the visual and textual elements to communicate it remains elusive. Scholars have offered interpretations of the project, sometimes unnecessarily identifying a single aspect of H. Polyeuktos's rich content as the structure's primary message. The theories that exclusively concerned on the temple of Jerusalem are just one example of this line of interpretation.⁹⁴ Patrons of sixth-century structures like H. Polyeuktos and H. Sophia could choose to make a variety of allusions and expected the visual, architectural, and textual motifs of the structures to communicate multiple messages.⁹⁵ It is precisely for its allusive qualities that ornamental material was used, since it could convey ideas that a patron could not express openly, in order to provide commentary on ideas that inscribed or recited texts stated more explicitly. This is important to keep in mind in order to correctly interpret both the intention of H. Polyeuktos's patroness and the role of the individual elements incorporated in the church. Thus, rather than reconstructing the temple of Jerusalem, whether Solomon's or Ezekiel's version, H. Polyeuktos's main purpose was to portray Anicia Juliana as partaking in and controlling several concepts of kingship, including biblical, Roman, and Sasanian traditions of royalty.

Fundamentally, H. Polyeuktos was Anicia Juliana's statement about her connection to the imperial office. Along with the many biblical and imperial allusions, which spoke to her spiritual and ancestral fitness to rule, the Sasanian ornamental material asserted that her family history and personal taste gave her a claim to sovereignty in a contemporary and truly cosmopolitan sense. The entire church celebrated her life experiences and accomplishments (such as championing Chalcedonian orthodoxy or her husband's military service), and especially her royal lineage, and thwarted imperial prerogatives. The church's massive size and richness, and its content, challenged the nascent Justinianic regime. The church itself functioned as a potent polemical statement, which was answered by Justinian with Hagia Sophia.

Anicia Juliana's innovative use of ornamental themes appropriated from the Sasanian royal architectural repertoire also contributed to the potency

of H. Polyeuktos's program. The Sasanian motifs performed several functions in the context of a global visual culture of royalty. Within the Roman empire the motifs alluded to wealth, refinement, and cross-cultural political savvy of the sort only an imperial figure would have. If we look at the situations and objects that brought individuals of Anicia Juliana's social class into contact with Sasanian material, the symbolic potential of the motifs become clearer. Diplomatic gifts, silk, war booty, and even reports about the Sasanian palaces from envoys would have served as points of contact. As a princess, Anicia Juliana would have been aware of the type of material that originated from the diplomatic exchanges and would certainly have been an avid consumer of silk of the sort that the San Vitale presbytery mosaic illustrates. The motifs also functioned as a symbolic display of the spoils of war, as in their use in Šāpūr I's productions at Bīšāpūr. As Anicia Juliana's husband, Areobindus, was hailed as conquering hero, it is likely that she came into contact with these ornamental motifs in the context of victory, displayed on the booty that Joshua the Stylite reports Areobindus took in Persarmenia.⁹⁶ Theophanes indicates that Areobindus personally received the sword and bracelet of "one of the greatest Persian generals," who fell in battle during engagements with the Persians.⁹⁷ A leaf of one of his consular diptychs also features this type of "Sasanizing" ornament, suggesting that it functioned as sort of family visual culture for Areobindus and Anicia Juliana.⁹⁸

Justinian's churches of Sergius and Bacchus and Hagia Sophia need less introduction and historiographical commentary as they have stood at the center of late Roman and Byzantine scholarship for some time. Like H. Polyeuktos, Justinian's foundations participated in multiple conversations. As regards interaristocratic rivalry, the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus was a statement of Justinian's early aristocratic confidence. Hagia Sophia responded to Anicia Juliana's challenges by reclaiming the status of city's largest and richest structure for the emperor. Since Hagia Sophia was an imperial foundation and the dominant structure of the city, like many aspects of Constantinople's cityscape, it also contributed to Roman and Sasanian competitive interaction and represented Justinian's understanding of himself as a sovereign in a global context. Sasanian ornamental motifs inflect several aspects of both structures. As C. Strube pointed out, Hagia Sophia's column capitals integrate Sasanian motifs uniformly, in contrast to Hagios Polyeuktos's rather raw appropriation. The surface-oriented, spiky acanthus occurs in symmetrical patterns on Hagia Sophia, reminiscent of the Sasanian palmette, although it is possible that the appearance of this motif represents an engagement with the architectural ornament of Hagios Polyeuktos rather than a direct appropriation of Sasanian material.

In contrast to its ornamental carving, Hagia Sophia's original, nonfigural mosaics contain a great amount of Sasanizing ornament, suggesting a direct and sustained engagement with and appropriation of Sasanian material.⁹⁹ It is outside the scope of this study to describe the mosaics in detail; I will only analyze select representative examples. As a whole, Hagia Sophia's mosaic ornament frames Sasanian ornamental motifs with more traditional Roman geometric ornament. In the narthex and side aisles, Sasanian ornamental motifs appear in four triangular sections of the groin vault, framed by more traditional geometric ornament. These Sasanian motifs also occur in the side aisles' small intermediate arches. Sasanian palmettes and lozenges originally embellished the edges of the nave's great tympana, pendentives, and dome, again bordered by more traditional geometric material.

Geometric forms consisting of an eight-sided star with a rosette at its center adorn the center of each section of the groin vault in the narthex mosaics. Stylized wings or a striped oval extend from each point (see fig. 43). The side aisles exhibit a somewhat different ornamental motif consisting of four ovals with stylized wings extending from the four sides of a composite square geometric pattern (see fig. 44). At each of the square's four corners smaller palmettes fill the space created by the wings. Both of these ornamental motifs contain elements that are extremely common in Sasanian visual culture, and some of the elements, such as the stylized oval and wing composite, have specifically royal connotations. The great tympanum carried simpler ornamental material consisting of alternating palmette and pomegranate or lozenge motifs. Sasanian ornament occurs on several non-mosaic surfaces of Hagia Sophia as well. The wooden support beams in the gallery, which have been radiocarbon dated to the sixth century, display ornamental carving with many ready parallels in both the mosaics and Sasanian stuccowork.¹⁰⁰ On some surfaces, these wooden buttresses carry palmettes and four-sided geometric motifs in medallions similar to those in the narthex mosaics. Lozenge or "spade" motifs similar to the tympanum mosaics fill the interstitial spaces. Alternating variations of simple, symmetrical, "rampant" palmette motifs cover other surfaces, again reflecting Sasanian stuccowork. The intarsia frieze that runs beneath the plaster cornice in the narthex incorporates Sasanian ornamental material into yet another Roman technique and consists of similar alternating palmettes and stylized floral patterns.

Rather than arguing for one discrete path of transmission over another, what is most significant is that in the sixth and seventh centuries the two courts enjoyed the same textile and architectural ornament. Several contemporary



Figure 43. Ceiling of inner narthex of Hagia Sophia. Portion of the approximately 2,900 sq ft (ca. 270 m²) of Hagia Sophia's mosaic surface dating to the age of Justinian (ca. 537). (Photo by author.)

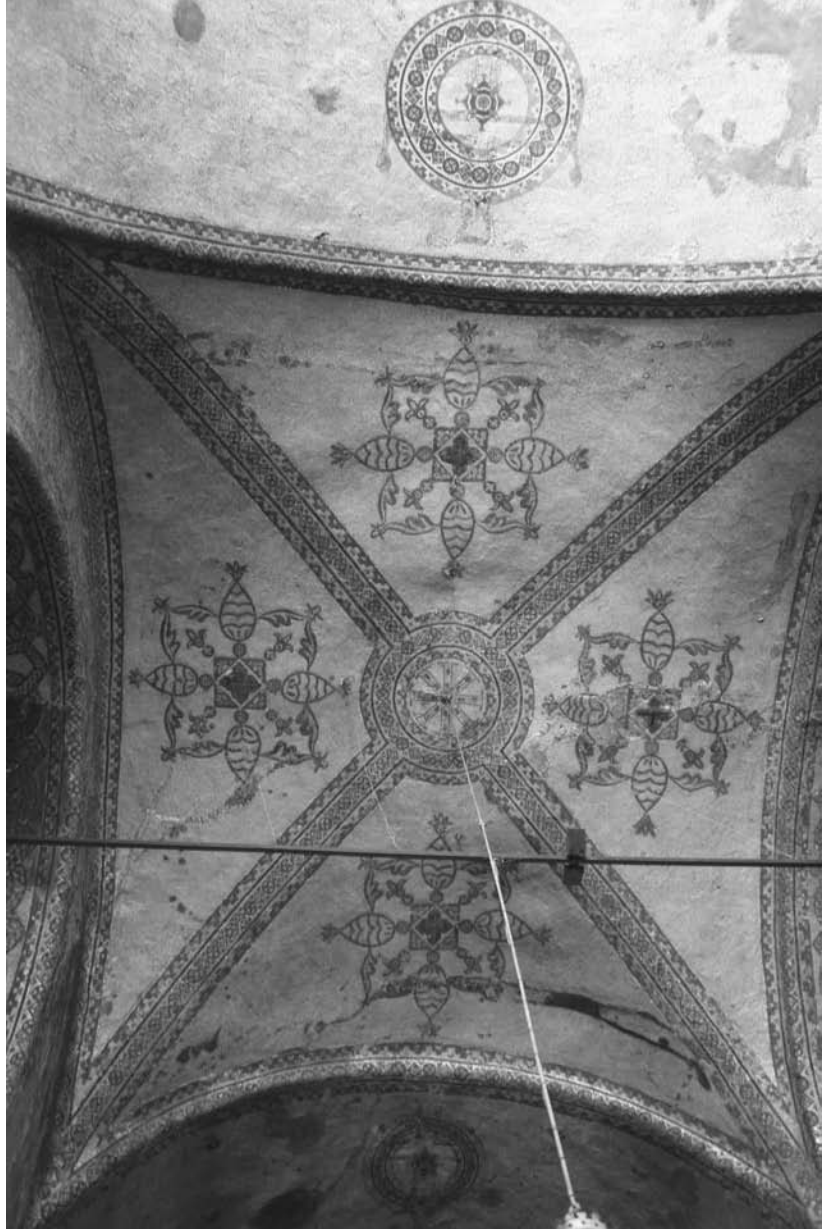


Figure 44. Ceiling mosaic of side aisles of Hagia Sophia (ca. 537).
(Photo by author.)

and earlier stucco plaques both from the vicinity of Ctesiphon and the provinces show close parallels with the geometric motifs in the Hagia Sophia narthex and nave mosaics. These geometric motifs are also common in extant Sasanian textiles. However, the representations of ornamental material in Kōsrow II's rock relief at Tāq-e Bostān provide the most secure Sasanian "primary source" corroboration of the motifs though it is possible that some of these motifs were "reintroduced" with Maurice's gifts to the Sasanian king of kings.¹⁰¹ The lozenge or "spade" shapes and palmette motifs on the great tympanum parallel motifs on Central Asian silk, as well as on silk clothing worn by Justinian's bodyguard and Kōsrow II. The mounted figure of Kōsrow II at Tāq-e Bostān also wears this type of ornamental material, on his caftan under his chain mail.¹⁰² In addition to their connection with precious textiles, aspects of the Sasanian ornamental material have a specifically regal charge in their original cultural milieu. The geometric motifs of the oval with the wings evoke the late Sasanian crown with the solar disk and wings of Warahrān.¹⁰³ Given his familiarity with the Sasanian royal image through diplomatic gifts, it is possible that Justinian would have been aware of this connotation of this type of geometric motif in Sasanian visual culture.

Such widespread evidence of appropriation raises the question, what motivated Justinian to cover most of the surface of his Great Church with motifs that predominated in the cultural sphere of his rival? Such imagery would give the viewer the impression that silk swathed all surfaces of the structure. In late antique Constantinople textiles controlled visual and physical access to a variety of restricted imperial and ecclesiastical spaces, such as the throne room of the Great Palace, as noted in the protocol for the reception of the Sasanian envoy, or the interior of a church before the Great Entrance. These ornamental patterns perhaps refer to this highly privileged textile, and some mosaic portrayals carry roughly similar ornamental representations. However, a larger question remains, why were these particular motifs used? Like that of H. Polyeuktos, the ornament of Hagia Sophia defined its patron's identity. Sasanian court art and architecture had become hugely popular in the Near East and Central Asia by the sixth century.¹⁰⁴ It replaced Hellenistic art as the new Eurasian aristocratic visual common culture and, with Hagios Polyeuktos and representations of textiles as evidence, its popularity was rising in the Roman empire as well.¹⁰⁵ By incorporating the Sasanian motifs, Justinian took ownership of this new visual font of aristocratic marks of distinction in the eyes of his own aristocratic hierarchy. For the potential audience of Sasanian diplomats, appropriating such motifs demonstrated that the Roman sovereign could control and

counter the Sasanian king of kings' hegemony of this abstract, yet potent, imagery of power and wealth. I am skeptical about whether Justinian would have viewed the winged ovals as a direct appropriation of the Sasanian crown, but the motifs' play on regal imagery within the Sasanian empire was widespread. In this sense, Justinian's appropriation of these motifs not only commented on his identity as a cosmopolitan sovereign, but strategically predicated the identity of Sasanian kingship on something that adorned and served the Roman emperor and the Christian religion.

Justinian was not alone in his appreciation and appropriation of his opponent's visual culture. Theophylakt Simokatta briefly mentions *Ḳosrow I's* Roman-style palace in Ctesiphon, which he reports originated from Justinian's gift of marble and architects, though the king of kings' sustained looting of Roman Syria would have provided him with enough raw material and skilled labor to cultivate his taste for late Roman architectural ornament without such gifts.¹⁰⁶ Excavations of a square terrace associated with the main palatial complex of the *Ayvān-e Kesrā*, known as Tell Dahab, bear out both Theophylakt's text and records of *Ḳosrow I's* war booty.¹⁰⁷ This precinct revealed a structure whose walls and floors were decorated with marble, opus sectile, and mosaics, as well as traditional Sasanian stucco sculpture.¹⁰⁸ Such Roman material certainly functioned as a trophy, similar to the king of kings' "re-creation" of Antioch (*Weh-andiōg-husraw*) near Ctesiphon complete with baths and a hippodrome. That the king of kings also included such material in one of his palaces suggests that *Ḳosrow I* engaged with the Roman architectural material as a manifestation of a cosmopolitan culture of kingship, as Justinian did.

While little remains of Roman imperial palaces in late sixth- and seventh-century Constantinople, *Ḳosrow II's* sculptural and architectural material from *Bīsotūn* and *Ṭāq-e Bostān* suggests that the phenomenon of a global, cosmopolitan visual culture of royalty continued, no doubt hastened by *Ḳosrow II's* initial alliance with the Roman court of Maurice. A number of column capitals reflect this. These architectural members stem from a structure that *Ḳosrow II* began but left unfinished at *Bīsotūn* and are kept now in the precincts of *Ṭāq-e Bostān*.¹⁰⁹ They are products of the last flowering of Sasanian art and provide an important testament to the melding of Roman and Sasanian architectural ornament right before the fall of the Sasanian empire. The capitals appropriate the architectural form of the late Roman impost basket capital, hitherto unknown in Sasanian architecture, but apply Sasanian ornamental material or relief sculptures of divinities or *Ḳosrow II*. The king of kings' rock-cut *ayvān* at *Ṭāq-e Bostān* selects several images and motifs from Roman visual culture and integrates them



Figure 45. Winged figure, detail of upper left figure, exterior of large *ayvān* at Tāq-e Bostān, seventh century. (Photo by author.)

thoughtfully with the more indigenous ornamental motifs, which predominate. The structure's winged Victories are its most obvious Roman elements (see fig. 45).¹¹⁰ While the symbolism of the figures has been discussed elsewhere, it is noteworthy here that the border at the neck and wrists of their garments carries a vegetal rinceau that is more similar to Greco-Roman grapevine scrolls, such as occur in the mosaics of the Great Palace, than to any Sasanian pattern. This ornamental material marks these figures as originating in another cultural milieu. On the whole, the Victories are visually subordinate to the Sasanian king of kings and comment on his identity as a cosmopolitan sovereign controlling several cultural and visual markers of kingship.¹¹¹

The phenomenon of ornamental exchange in the sixth and seventh centuries differed from that which arose under Šāpūr I in the third century, and shows a more sophisticated—and mutual—integration of foreign motifs. In the sixth century, the process of ornamental appropriation grew out of the two courts' diplomatic interactions and subsequent familiarity with their opponent's ritual and visual culture. Appropriating this ornament was yet an-

other tactic in their struggle to dominate the marks of distinction of the Mediterranean, Near East, and Central Asia. In this regard the Sasanian court was much more successful than the Roman court, since Sasanian ornamental motifs and visual culture gained great popularity throughout Central Asia, China, and of course the Mediterranean. The predominance of Sasanian-inflected imagery in Central Asian silk, facilitated by the trading activity of the Sogdians, proved to be an extremely effective mode of dissemination for Sasanian court motifs, which in turn influenced later Roman visual culture, to the point that Sasanian ornament even articulated the sixth-century Roman sartorial hierarchy, as portrayed in the San Vitale mosaic.¹¹²

However, the Roman court and its aristocrats, like Anicia Juliana, would not have viewed developments in quite this manner. Once these images and motifs entered into Roman visual culture they gained a secondary meaning from their use in the Roman court, providing a level of allusion and flexibility that highly defined and even legislated imperial iconographies did not. Justinian's *tablion* on his purple *chlamys* and the vast spaces of Hagia Sophia formed the ultimate frame of reference for Sasanian ornamental material in Roman visual culture, demonstrating the emperor's control over this mark of distinction at least within his own culture. Like the two courts' appropriations of their opponent's ritual and ideological material, the practice of appropriating foreign ornamental material was a tool with which the sovereigns defined their relational identities and situated themselves in a larger *kosmos* of power.

Epilogue

The Legacy of the Two Eyes of the Earth

Rome and Sasanian Iran's fraught relationship as brothers and enemies was the crucible that forged the late antique Mediterranean, Europe, and western Asia. The end result of their coexistence was not just an exchange of cultural material, but a truly global, cross-cultural, and extrareligious language of debate and legitimacy.

With the collapse of the Sasanian empire and the radical transformation of the Roman empire after the Muslim invasions, an elite inhabitant of late seventh-century Constantinople or Ctesiphon would have certainly experienced the world as he knew it dissolving before his eyes.¹ Yet the traditions of the earth's two eyes survived this cataclysmic period and endured long after the empires themselves fell. After the dissolution of the Sasanian empire, members of the court fled to Constantinople and Tang China, establishing two centers of resistance and agitation for the resurrection of the empire. Although unable to reconstitute the empire, their efforts ensured that Iranian culture continued to be felt in both the East and the West.² On the Iranian Plateau and in Central Asia, the *dehgān* class of wealthy provincial landowners nurtured the traditions of Iranian culture and the Sasanian court and was responsible for their preservation and later incorporation into Islamic court culture.³

The private appropriation of Roman and Sasanian cosmocratic ideals by the Umayyad elite provided the raw material for their eclectic imaginings of power, initiating a process of reinvention and reinvigoration that coalesced on a more public stage with the Abbasids and their successor states.⁴ Once the imperial court in Constantinople regained its footing and rose from the ashes of the seventh century, its emperors were just as interested in recapturing the symbolic preeminence of their predecessors as they were in re-

gaining a strategic advantage against Islam and the new barbarian states of Europe.⁵ While Constantine VII commented on the actual history and identity of contemporary Muslim states (albeit chauvinistically) in his imperial administration manual, in his *Book of Ceremonies* he preserved Peter the Patrician's sixth-century diplomatic treatise on the reception of Persian envoys as a template for receiving Muslim envoys.⁶ With the Sasanian and Roman courts dissolved, the ornamental motifs that had been controlled by a few spread throughout court arts in the Mediterranean, northern Europe, and Western and Central Asia.⁷

Aspiring medieval rulers such as Hārūn al-Rašid, Theophilus, Charlemagne, and Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus looked for a cosmocratic brother to play the role of Roman emperor or Persian king of kings as set by the precedent of Justinian or Kōsrow I, although only the Abbasid caliph could fully enact the late antique precedent of making a gift of an elephant.⁸ When the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rašid sent such an embassy, in this case to Charlemagne, he followed the precedent of the Sasanian court in encoding subtle statements of challenge and subordination within lavish gifts intended to dazzle his rival. In addition to an elephant and other gifts, Hārūn (called *princeps Persarum* in Carolingian court poetry) bestowed a robe of honor on Charlemagne, marking this "Roman" emperor as an honored vassal and faithful member of the caliphal court.⁹

The meeting and melding of Roman and Sasanian practices of kingship shaped the expression of power in the Mediterranean, Near East, Central and South Asia, and China from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century.¹⁰ Indeed, aspects of the Roman and Sasanian legacy provided a flexible, and contestable, prototype not only for Byzantine emperors and Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs, but also for Mongol khans, Ottoman sultans, Russian czars, Holy Roman emperors, Safavid kings of kings, and Mughal emperors alike.¹¹ Despite the destruction of the old order, Rome and Sasanian Iran's relationship indelibly imprinted world politics and symbolics of power for almost a millennium thereafter, serving as a prestigious template for the exercise of power and diplomacy from the Atlantic to Central and South Asia.

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Notes

1. INTRODUCTION

1. Taking the place of Arthur Christensen's venerable but outdated *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, Touraj Daryaee's *Sasanian Persia* offers an excellent and accessible introduction to the empire's history, economy, religions, languages, and culture: T. Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009). The classic introduction to the late antique Mediterranean and Europe is P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, A.D. 150–750* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989); for an overview of Roman political history in the third century, see O. Hekster, *Rome and Its Empire, A.D. 193–284* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); an in-depth introduction to the history of the late Roman/early Byzantine empire: A. Bowman, Av. Cameron, and P. Garnsey, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 12, *The Crisis of Empire, A.D. 193–337* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Av. Cameron and P. Garnsey, *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 13, *The Late Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Av. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, and M. Whitby, *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 14, *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425–600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); J. Shepherd, ed. *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire, c. 500–1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For an introduction to the history of the Roman and Sasanian empires' military, economic, and diplomatic dealings, see E. Winter and B. Dignas, *Rom und das Perserreich: Zwei Weltmächte zwischen Konfrontation und Koexistenz* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001); English edition with two new chapters ("Warfare" and "Emperor and King of Kings") and an expanded section on Armenia: *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); A. Farhani, review of *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals*, by B. Dignas and E. Winter, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2009.03.51.

2. For the damages that the Pahlavi regime's close association with the pre-

Islamic past wrought on subsequent scholarly endeavors in Iran, as well as other misappropriations (both Iranian and Euro-American) of the pre-Islamic heritage for nationalist agendas, see K. Abdi, "Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran," *AJA* 105 (2001): 51–76; M. G. Majd, *The Great American Plunder of Persia's Antiquities, 1925–41* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2003).

3. The relationship between the two realms has vexed and intrigued scholars in many disciplines, and much progress has been made on historical, legal, and linguistic issues; however, previous work on Sasanian and Roman relations does not provide satisfactory methodological and theoretical departures for a study of cross-cultural interaction. For a review of these past methodologies and related critical terms in other disciplines, see M. Canepa, ed., "Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction among Ancient and Early Medieval Visual Cultures," ed. M. Canepa. *Ars Orientalis* 38 (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian, 2007).

4. In order to analyze cultural interaction critically, it is necessary to constantly assess the stability and unity of the cultures that participate in such an interchange, as well as examine one's definition or expectations of culture. An increased awareness of the composite and contested nature of culture has led to the critique of earlier conceptions of culture that cast it as too stable, bounded, and homogeneous to be useful in a world (either ancient or modern) characterized by migrations, overlapping and interspersed ethnic and linguistic groups, and shifting webs of political, religious, economic, social, and class-based alliances. Unlike terms such as *civilization*, *society* or *state*, the term *culture* provides a conceptual category that encompasses a variety of practices that constitute identity and power, including those of a political, religious, technological, economic, and artistic nature. In keeping with my methodological attention to practice I understand *culture* as referring to a conglomerate of overlapping practices rather than hard and fast essential identities. This way one can move beyond competing definitions of culture and more directly access the processes that those definitions attempt to encompass. For further discussion of the debate regarding unitary ideas of culture, see M. Canepa, "The Two Eyes of the Earth: Competition and Exchange in the Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004), 132–40. There has been a beneficial shift in thinking in Iranian studies in particular in this regard: J. Wiesehöfer, "Randkultur' oder 'Nabel der Welt'? Das Sasanidenreich und der Westen: Anmerkungen eines Althistorikers," in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, ed. J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, *Oriens et Occidens* 13 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 11–12; M. Canepa, review of *Ērān ud Anērān*, by J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2008.01.35.

5. The debate about when Rome ended and Byzantium began, though largely meaningless, has generated numerous termini, from 324 to 476 to 602. In this work I refer to the late Roman/early Byzantine empire as the Roman empire. While many changes took place, there was no drastic cultural break be-

tween the empire of Severus Alexander and that of Heraclius to suggest such a shift in terminology, and certainly nothing on the order of Islam's radical re-making of the global geopolitical order in the seventh century. Throughout their interaction with the Romans, the Sasanians knew them only as "Roman" (*Hrōm/Hrōmayīg*), and the Roman court understood itself to be "Roman" until the fall of Constantinople to the Turks. On Mommsen's periodization and terms "Principate" and "Dominate," see especially A. Demandt, *Die Spätantike: Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian 284–565 n. Chr.*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 3.6 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1989), 475–80; id., *Der Fall Roms: Die Auflösung des römischen Reiches im Urteil der Nachwelt* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1984); see also A. Kazhdan, "Byzantium, History of," *ODB* 1: 345–56; relating to the changes in culture of Iconoclasm and beyond, see A. Kazhdan and A. Cutler, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Byzantine History," *Byzantion* 52 (1982): 429–78. Such a study of the social, political, and cultural shifts in the Sasanian empire, will be very beneficial as long as it avoids the pitfalls that such periodization presented in scholarship on the Roman empire: M. R. Shayegan, "Approaches to the Study of Sasanian History," in *Paitimāna: Essays in Iranian, Indo-European, and Indian Studies in Honor of Hans-Peter Schmidt*, ed. Siamak Adhami (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 2: 363–84.

6. Such works as Treitinger's *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell*, Grabar's *L'empereur dans l'art byzantine*, and Hunger's *Prooimion* have a tendency to present a static picture, since they proceed thematically rather than developmentally. See discussion of Treitinger in F. Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 24. On the variety of terminologies for this period, see Av. Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1993), 7–8 and 238; id., *Later Roman Empire: A.D. 284–430* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 1–2; also Kazhdan's comments on periodization in his overview of Byzantine history in *ODB* 1: 345–46.

7. Old Persian *Pārsa*; Middle Persian *Pārs*; New Persian *Fārs*. English *Persia*.

8. The process unfolded differently in Rome and Iran. Although it was certainly the face of the empire that it showed externally, this movement toward centralization and autocracy, while present, was less inexorable and permanent in Iran than in Rome. In between and following periods of autocratic consolidation of power on the part of the king of kings, the great families of Iran, especially the Parthian (Pahlav) families, reasserted themselves. The great Parthian families became firmly and institutionally integrated into the administration of the empire, while local kings and dynasts, from the Caucasus to South Asia, were largely extinguished or replaced by a Sasanian king or Parthian military governor. Indeed, these Parthian families formed the backbone of Sasanian military and administrative power. It has been argued that one of the main reasons that the Sasanian empire crumbled at the Arab advance was that the Parthian families withdrew their support from the Sasanian dynasty. They came to their own terms with the Arab invaders, surviving intact for centuries beyond; P. Pourshariati, *The Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian*

Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008). Study of one of the most important periods of centralization: A. Gariboldi, *Il regno di Xusraw dall'anima immortale: riforme economiche e rivolte sociali nell'Iran sasanide del VI secolo* (Milan: Mimesis, 2006).

9. For a useful overview of the economic and military scale of the two empires, see J. Howard-Johnston, "The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: A Comparison," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 3, *States, Resources, and Armies*, ed. Av. Cameron (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 157–226.

10. J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1–40 and 436–58.

11. See G. Fowden, *Qusayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 36 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

2. THE ART AND RITUAL OF KINGSHIP WITHIN AND BETWEEN ROME AND SASANIAN IRAN

1. Menander Protector, frag. 16.1, trans. Blockley, 153.

2. While both cultures developed their own vocabularies of ceremonial practice, I use the word *ritual* to refer generally to all expressive actions that occurred within and between the Sasanian and Roman empires, whether religious or secular, or originating in the Iranian or Mediterranean sphere. This methodological approach provides a field of analysis that is not influenced by ancient or modern attitudes about where religion ends and the secular begins. This enables one to evaluate all activities that, in some way, focused and defined the emperors' identities in relation to each other or the supernatural, no matter whether such activities conformed to the explicit precepts of orthodox Christianity or Zoroastrianism or ran heretically counter to them. An important historiographical study of Zoroastrian ritual: M. Stausberg, "Contextualizing the Contexts: On the Study of Zoroastrian Rituals," in *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, ed. M. Stausberg (Leiden and New York: Brill, 2004), 1–56. On debates about ritual and belief, see M. Canepa, "The Two Eyes of the Earth: Competition and Exchange in the Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004), 13–14. On the rhetoric, technologies, and rituals of the modern art museum and their role in conditioning the viewer's approach to art objects, see C. Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); D. Preziosi, "The Art of Art History," in *The Art of Art History*, ed. D. Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 507–25; D. Carrier, *Museum Skepticism: A History of Display of Art in Public Galleries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

3. While this understanding of the aesthetic elements of ritual has a rich history of debate and critical vocabulary in religious studies and anthropology, art history is only beginning to fully exploit it. A promising study of art and ritual in the context of Zoroastrianism: J. W. Boyd and R. G. Williams, "The Art

of Ritual in a Competitive Context," in *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, ed. Stausberg, 137. While not theoretically grounded, Franz Alto Bauer's work represents an important step forward in its consideration of the reciprocal nature of late Roman imperial ritual and liturgy and the development of Constantinople: F. A. Bauer, "Urban Space and Ritual: Constantinople in Late Antiquity," in *Imperial Art as Christian Art—Christian Art as Imperial Art: Expression and Meaning in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Justinian*, ed. J. Rasmus Brandt and O. Steen (Rome: Bardi Editore, 2001), 27–61. Although focused on the medieval era, A. Berger discusses the aural elements of imperial ritual: A. Berger, "Die akustische Dimension des Kaiserzeremoniells: Gesang, Orgelspiel und Automaten," in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft*, BYZAS 5, ed. F. A. Bauer (Istanbul: Ege Yayinlari, 2006), 63–77.

4. The language of metaphor provides a valuable tool for elucidating the complex relationships between these ritual elements. I have found it useful to understand Roman and Sasanian ritual environments as emerging from a web of separate yet meaningfully related elements animated by a series of metonymic and metaphoric associations—hence my term "ritual-visual nexus." In Roman and Sasanian royal ceremonial, overlapping skeins of these metaphoric and metonymic associations bound together the ritual constituents and, since they provided a flexible yet expressively powerful syntax of ritual, were the semantic basis of all expressive events. Metonymic associations—that is, relationships of contextual contiguity—formed when two or more ritual or artistic elements occurred in the same space or time or took place one after another in a temporal sequence. Metaphoric associations governed the logic between two elements that shared a similar function or identity. One metaphoric or metonymic association often implied yet another, thus generating chains of metaphoric and metonymic associations. For discussion of the role of metaphor in anthropological and religious studies material, see Canepa, "Competition and Exchange," 17–19; id., "Distant Displays of Power: Understanding Cross-Cultural Interaction Among the Elites of Rome, Sasanian Iran and Sui-Tang China," in *Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction among the Ancient and Early Medieval Mediterranean, Near East, and Asia*, ed. M. Canepa, *Ars Orientalis* 38 (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian, 2007).

5. For most of the third century, Roman imperial accessions took place in the field, usually in front of a rebellious army, rather than in the city of Rome. Thus they were decidedly detached from urban space. At the end of the third century Diocletian controlled and codified the traditions of military election; yet for Tetrarchic elections the only significant space necessary was an impromptu Campus Martius. Throughout the fourth century the basic elements remained the same: the candidate was simply acclaimed by troops and dressed in the symbols of imperial office, the diadem (often with a torque as substitute) and the purple *paludamentum*, or purple general's cloak; F. Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 26–27, 93–100.

6. *De cer.* 1.91, 410–17; Bauer, "Urban Space and Ritual," 40–48 with discussion of previous bibliography.

7. On the role of the Christian hierarchy in this accession, see Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 100–102.

8. H. Glück, *Das Hebdomon und seine Reste in Makriköi: Untersuchungen zur Baukunst und Plastik von Konstantinopel* (Vienna: Staatsdruckerei, 1920); R. Demangel, *Contribution à la topographie de L'Hebdomon* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1945); R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1964), 446–49; C. Mango, "Hebdomon," *ODB* 2: 907.

9. *De cer.* 1.91, 410–11.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *De cer.* 1.91, 411.

12. *Ibid.* The emperor at this point had most of the elements of the official military costume represented often on coins: jeweled helmet with a pearl diadem and, at this point, a Chi-Rho, gilded armor, the purple *paludamentum/chlamys*, spear, gilded relief-decorated shield, purple tunic and leggings, military boots, and purple military belt. A. Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," *MDAIRA* 50 (1935): 66–68; Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 116.

13. Argued in V. Tiftixoglu, "Die Helenianai nebst einigen anderen Besitzungen im Vorfeld des frühen Konstantinopel," in *Studien zur Frühgeschichte Konstantinopels*, ed. G. Beck (Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie der Universität, 1973), 49–122.

14. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*, 139 and 446–49; A. Kazhdan, "Hagiographical Notes," *Byzantion* 56 (1986): 170.

15. C. Mango, "The Triumphal Way of Constantinople and the Golden Gate," *DOP* 54 (2000): 174; W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls: Byzantion, Konstantinopolis, Istanbul bis zum Beginn d. 17th* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1977), 297. Tiftixoglu concluded that the text refers to the accession of Honorius in 393 (Tiftixoglu, "Die Helenianai," 82; Bauer, "Urban Space and Ritual," 41–42); however, the fact that it was incorporated into a single document specifically connected with Leo I's ceremony indicates that it was intended as a semantic whole.

16. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*; A. Berger, "Tauros e sigma: Due piazze di Costantinopoli," in *Bisanzio e l'Occidente: Arte, archeologia, storia (Studi in onore di Fernanda de'Maffei)*, ed. M. Bonfioli, R. Farioli Companati, and A. Garzya (Rome: Viella, 1996), 19–24.

17. The civilian costume still included military elements, as it was derived from third-century military uniforms: diadem, purple *paludamentum/chlamys* clasped at the right shoulder with a jeweled fibula, a white silk tunic with gold stitching, purple trousers, jeweled purple belt (*cingulum*), purple jeweled shoes (*campagia*), purple *mappa*, and a short scepter; Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," 57–58; Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 116.

18. The chariot, quite possibly a quadriga, was preceded by patricians who bore "a cross and scepters," an interesting visual combination of the ancient consular and newer Christian symbols of power; *De cer.* 1.91, 414.10–11.

19. *De cer.* 1.91, 414. Among its many other symbolic qualities, Constantine's gilded statue provided a connection between New Rome and Old Rome, as the golden statue on the column was the double of Rome's colossal statue of Sol, whose features had been reworked into Constantine's. See M. Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher: Theomorphes Herrscherbild und politische Symbolik im Hellenismus und in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1998), 284–87; S. Ensoli, "I colossi di bronzo a Roma in età tardoantica: Dal Colosso di Nerone al Colosso di Costantino, A proposito dei tre frammenti bronzei dei Musei Capitolini," in *Aurea Roma: Dalla città pagana alla città cristiana*, ed. S. Ensoli and E. La Rocca (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2000), 66–90; Müller-Wiener, 255. On the Roman precursor specifically, see E. Marlowe, "Framing the Sun: The Arch of Constantine and the Roman Cityscape," *Art Bulletin* 88.2 (2006): 223–42.

20. *De cer.* 1.91, 414–15. The general form of what we see in this late antique text parallels the role and ritual identity of emperor in the medieval Byzantine liturgy. On the medieval place of the emperor in the liturgy, see G. Majeska, "The Emperor in His Church: Imperial Ritual in the Church of St. Sophia," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 1–11.

21. *De cer.* 1.91, 414–15.

22. *De cer.* 1.91, 415.

23. Overviews of the Great Palace, ranging from late antiquity to the Middle Ages: J. Bardill, "Visualizing the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople," in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft*, ed. F. A. Bauer, BYZAS 5 (Istanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2006), 5–45; id., "The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors and the Walker Trust Excavations," *JRA* 12 (1999): 216–30.

24. *De cer.* 1.91, 415–16.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *De cer.* 1.91, 416–17.

27. For example, on 11 April 491, Anastasius I was acclaimed in the hippodrome with a visit to Hagia Sophia at the end of the ritual (*De cer.* 1.91, 417–25); Justin I was raised to the purple on 9 July 518 inside the Great Palace, only later processing to the hippodrome for acclamations (*De cer.* 1.91, 426–30); Justinian I's accession took place 1 August 527 entirely in the Great Palace with the palace guards ranged in the courtyards and corridors (*De cer.* 1.91, 432–33); Justin II's took place 14 November 565 in the Great Palace but was also linked as part of a carefully orchestrated series of events to Justinian II's funerary procession, acclamations in the hippodrome, and reception of Avar envoys and even to Justin II's consular celebrations on 1 January 566 (*Corippus In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris*, bks. 2–4); on 4 July 638 Heraclius raised his son to be co-emperor in the church of St. Stephan in the Great Palace; yet afterward the senate viewed and acclaimed the emperors in the open space of the Augusteum; the ceremony then concluded in Hagia Sophia with a liturgy (*De cer.* 1.91, 627–28).

28. A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1944; repr., Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1971), 172–78 and 180 n. 1;

A. S. Shahbazi, "Coronation," *Elr* (1993) 6: 277–79; al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, ed. and trans. E. Sachau (London: Unveränd, 1879; repr., Frankfurt: Minerva, 1969), 217; M. Boyce, "On the Calendar of Zoroastrian Feasts," *BSOAS* 33.3 (1970): 413–14.

29. See Zaehner's description of the cosmological significance of the two feasts: R. C. Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (New York: Putnam Press, 1961; London: Phoenix Press, 2002), 138–39.

30. Islamic and Pahlavi sources on *Nowruz* are collected in J. Markwart, "Das Nauroz: Seine Geschichte und seine Bedeutung," in *Dr. Modi Memorial Volume Papers on Indo-Iranian and Other Subjects*, ed. Dr. Modi Volume Editorial Board (Bombay: Fort Printing Press, 1930), 709–65. On the three events collapsed, see M. Molé, *Culte, mythe, et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien: Le problème zoroastrien et la tradition mazdéenne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 25, 113–20. Reflected in the later Islamic tradition: *ŠN* 1.41–42. On Yima, king of the golden age and of the dead, in the scope of proto-Indo-European cosmology and its Zoroastrian refashioning, see B. Lincoln, *Death, War, and Sacrifice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 37–39.

31. Bīrūnī, *Chronology*, 200; P. O. Skjærvø, "Smashing Urine: Yasna 48.10," in *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, ed. Stausberg, 252–81; Shahbazi, "Coronation."

32. Elements are contained within the larger cycle of *Yt.* 19; the later tradition: *ŠN* 1.81, 5.481.

33. Ba'lamī 936–37; *ŠN* 7.217–19, 286, 300–301. While the patriarch of Constantinople also began crowning the Roman emperor during this century, there is no need to identify one empire or the other as the absolute progenitor of such a practice; see Shahbazi, "Coronation," for previous speculation on this.

34. M. Boyce, "Ādur Gušnasp," *Elr* (1983) 1: 475–76. For the probable ancient itinerary and road system, see W. Kleiss, "Alte Wege in West-Iran," *AMI* 10 (1977): 136–52, esp. sect. 2, "Die sasanidische Königsweg von Ktesiphon zum Takht-i Suleiman," 141–46; J. Wiesehöfer, "'Königsfeuer' und 'Thron Salomons': Der Tacht-i Sulaiman in Iranisch-Azerbaidshān," in *Heilige Orte in Asien und Afrika: Räume göttlicher Macht und menschlicher Verehrung*, ed. A. Messner and K. Hirschler (Hamburg: E. B. Verlag, 2007), 59–75.

35. Apart from the archaeological remains at Takht-e Solaymān, the only primary sources that refer to this, or for that matter any of the great fires, are seals. See R. Gyselen, "Les grands feux de l'empire sassanide: Quelques témoignages sigilliographiques," in *Religious Themes and Texts of Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia*, ed. C. G. Cereti et al. (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2003), 38; R. Naumann, *Die Ruinen von Tacht-e Suleiman und Zendan-e Suleiman und Umgebung* (Berlin: Reimer, 1977). Recent discussion of the function of the ground plans: B. Kaim, "Ancient Fire Temples in the Light of the Discovery at Mele Hairam," *IrAnt* 39 (2004): 323–32; for earlier bibliography, see D. Huff, "Takht-e Solaymān," *Elr*. The settlement of Ganzak (as well the place-name, which derives from the Achaemenian word for "treasury") was associated with the sanctuary of Ādur Gušnasp since antiquity. In the fifth century the actual

fire sanctuary was moved to the site of Taḳt-e Solaymān and evidently took with it some of the place-names associated with it, such as Šīz (the colloquial form of the Avestan name for the lake associated with the fire: *čāēčastā*) and Ganzak. Boyce, “Ādur Gušnašp”; id., “Ganzak,” *Elr* (2001) 10: 289–90; see also M. Tardieu, “Les gisements miniers de l’Azerbayjan méridional (région de Taxt-e Soleyman) et la localisation de Gazaka,” *BAL* 12 (1998): 249–68.

36. Despite their apparent antiquity, their names are not specifically mentioned in the Avestan texts; Molé, *Culte, mythe, et cosmologie*, 452–59.

37. *Bundahišn* 17.7; with the other Pahlavi sources: Molé, *Culte, mythe, et cosmologie*, 452–59.

38. Along with this politicization, in the early Sasanian era, they became classified as representing the three social castes of the Sasanian empire, warrior, priestly and agriculturalist. See M. Boyce, “Ādur Burzēn-Mihr” *Elr* (1983) 1: 472–73; id., “Ādur Gušnašp”; id., “Ātaš,” *Elr* (1989) 2: 1–5. Summarized in M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 2001), 123–25.

39. Kōsrow II dismounted to walk the rest of the way once he had seen the dome of the sanctuary; *ŠN* 9.135.2128. A certain strain of the tradition claims the kings made the whole trip on foot; Ibn Kurdābeh 119; M. Abkaʿi-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs in der Sasanidenzeit*, Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik 13 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2000), 115.

40. *Bundahišn* 18.12; *Mēnōg ī xrad* 27.59–63; *Tarīk-e Sistān* 35–36. Boyce, “Ādur Gušnašp,” 472; for other Islamic sources: Abkaʿi-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 233–34.

41. According to the later Islamic tradition, Bahrām V visited the site before heading out to campaign against the “Turks” and made an offering of the crown and harem of the conquered leader upon his victorious return; *Ṭāʾalebī, Ġorar*, 359–60; *Ṭabarī*, 864–66 (*Ṭabarī* trans., 93–99); Baʿlami, *Tārīk*, 942.

42. *ŠN* 9.135.2130–136.2131; Abkaʿi-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 234.

43. For a discussion of the first ecclesiastical coronations, see J. L. Nelson, “Symbols in Context,” *Studies in Church History* 8 (1976): 97–119.

44. There is no single, focused analysis of the phenomenon; however, many scholars over the years, working on different dynasties and time periods, have remarked on the many shared cultic and architectural features. For an overview (not meant as exhaustive), see J. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 140–42; K. Schippmann, *Die iranischen Feuerheiligtümer*, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 31 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971); H. Waldmann, *Der kommagenische Mazdaismus*, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 37 (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1991); N. Sims-Williams and J. Cribb, “A New Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 4 (1995/1996): 75–142; P. Huyse, “Überlegungen zum BAGOLAGGO des Kaniška I,” in *Religious Themes and Texts of Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia*, ed. C. G. Cereti, M. Maggi, and E. Provasi (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2003), 175–88.

45. The most recent work: M. Facella, *La dinastia degli Orontidi nella Com-*

magene ellenistico-romana (Pisa: Giardini, 2006), 251–97; M. Canepa, review of Facella, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2007.01.21; K. Koch, “Persisch-hellenistischer Synkretismus am Beispiel Kommagene mit einem Seitenblick auf Israel,” in *Religion und Religionskontakte im Zeitalter der Achämeniden*, ed. R. G. Kratz, Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie 22 (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 2002), 281–301; J. Wagner, ed., *Gottkönige am Euphrat: Neue Ausgrabungen und Forschungen in Kommagene* (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 2000); Waldmann, *Der kommagenische Mazdaismus*.

46. D. Schlumberger, M. Le Berre, and G. Fussman, *Surkh Kotal en Bactriane*, vol. 1, *Les Temples: Architecture, Sculpture, Inscriptions* (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 1983); H. Humbach, “The Great Surkh Kotal Inscription,” in *Religious Themes and Texts*, ed. Cereti et al., 157–66; Huyse, “Überlegungen zum BAGOLAGGO,” 175–88. Related is the extensive Kušān inscription found near Bagram from a still unlocated sanctuary: Sims-Williams and Cribb, “New Bactrian Inscription,” 75–142.

47. Huyse, “Überlegungen zum BAGOLAGGO,” 175–88; Rosenfield, *Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, 140–42.

48. G. Gullini, *Architettura iranica dagli Achemenidi ai Sasanidi: Il “palazzo” di Kuh-i Kwagia, Seistan* (Turin: Einaudi, 1964); T. Kawami, “Kuh-e Kwaja, Iran, and Its Wall Paintings: The Records of Ernst Herzfeld,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 22 (1987): 13–52; A. D. H. Bivar, “Cosmopolitan Deities and Hellenistic Traces at Kuh-e Kwāja in Sistan,” in *Religious Themes and Texts*, ed. Cereti et al., 1–5.

49. Schippman, *Die iranischen Feuerheiligtümer*, 227–33.

50. Movses Khorenats'i, *The History of the Armenians*, trans. Thomson, 143, 166, 176, 216, 224.

51. It is possible that the cultic activity took place at the site itself; however, the inscription is the only record we have of this foundation; ŠKZ 33–50; P. Huyse, *Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I. an der Ka'ba-i Zardušt (ŠKZ)*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* 3.1 (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1999) 2: 105–7.

52. M. Boyce, “Iconoclasm among the Zoroastrians,” in *Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 93–111.

53. *Ibid.*, 93.

54. Shahbazi, “Coronation”; Boyce, “Ātaš.” If the later Pahlavi texts provide any indication, the establishment and maintenance of such a fire was an incredibly arduous and expensive endeavor; M. Vitalone, “Fires and the Establishment of *ātas bahrāms* in the Zoroastrian Tradition,” in *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, ed. Stausberg, 425–42.

55. M. Alram, “Early Sasanian Coinage,” in *The Sasanian Era*, ed. V. S. Sarkhosh Curtis and S. Stewart, *The Idea of Iran* 3 (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 17–30.

56. M. Alram and R. Gyselen, *Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum Paris-Berlin-Wien*, Bd. 1, *Ardashir I. – Shapur I.*, *DenkWein* 317, *VeröffNumKom* 41

(Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), 36–37; R. Göbl, *Sasanian Numismatics*, trans. P. Severan (Braunschweig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1971), 17–18.

57. Alram and Gyselen, *Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum*, 36 and 191–92; Göbl, *Sasanian Numismatics*, 18.

58. They could also symbolize the king of kings as the protector of the sacred fire: Alram, “Early Sasanian Coinage,” 21.

59. ŠKZ 33–50.

60. At Šāpūr I’s foundation, Bīšāpūr in southwestern Fārs, the excavators discovered a monument erected by a local grandee whose constituent elements closely match those of a typical Middle Iranian dynastic fire, though not the architectural shape. The monument consisted of an inscription dedicating it to Šāpūr, his father, Ardašīr I, and his grandfather Pāpāg; a statue of the king (and possibly one of another figure, too); and a fire altar. G. Salles, “Châpour: Rapport préliminaire de la première campagne de fouilles (Automne 1935–Printemps 1936),” *RAA* 10 (1936): 120–23; R. Ghirshman, “Inscription du monument de Châpour Ier à Châpour,” *RAA* 10 (1936): 123–29. The so-called Sasanian Manor House excavated at Hājīābād in the province of Fārs preserves an example of a possible domestic sanctuary. Room 114 of the country villa housed a shrine that included nearly life-size relief sculptures of the goddess Anāhīd with busts of royal personages above, several identifiable as Šāpūr II and Bahrām II Kušānšāh, a Kušāno-Sasanian governor. Considering the preponderance of the female figures, it appears that the cult in this room was intended to be centered on water, the element sacred to the goddess Anāhīd, though like Bīšāpūr, another early Sasanian site with an Anāhīd sanctuary, an adjacent room housed a fire sanctuary. M. Azarnoush, *The Sasanian Manor House at Hājīābād, Iran*, Monografie di Mesopotamia 3 (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1994), 80–88, 102–65 (cult); for the identification of the royal figures, 158–61; identification of stucco figures, 162–63. The complex was abandoned before it was actually used.

61. Paulus Silentarius *Descr. S. Sophiae* 755.

62. M. Tavoosi, with notes by R. N. Frye, “An Inscribed Capital Dating from the Time of Shapur I,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 3 (1989): 25–38; new ed. and trans. of the inscription: P. Gignoux, “D’Abnūn à Māhān: Étude de deux inscriptions sassanides,” *StudIr* 20 (1991): 23–32; for later bibliography concerning the inscription, see Alram and Gyselen, *Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum*, 32 n. 9.

63. Menander Protector, frag. 16.1.

64. M. Whitby, *CAH* 14 (2000): 91–94.

65. “Ritual is an exercise in the strategy of choice.” J. Z. Smith, “The Bare Facts of Ritual,” in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 56.

66. “Metaphoric innovation, like any innovation rests with the few.” J. W. Fernandez, *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 58.

67. Movses Khorenats’i 2.71, trans. Thomson, 244. The oft-quoted apology

in the *Letter of Tansar* reflects this: “Next for what you said, that the King of kings has taken away fires from the fire-temples, extinguished them and blotted them out, and that no one has ever before presumed so far against religion; know that the case is not so grievous, but has been wrongly reported to you. The truth is that after Darius each of the ‘kings of the peoples’ built its own fire-temple. This was pure innovation, introduced by them without the authority of kings of old. The King of kings has razed the temples, and confiscated the endowments, and had the fires carried back to their places of origin.” *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 47.

68. G. Greatrex, “The Nika Riot: A Reappraisal,” *JHS* 117 (1997): 60; M. Meier, “Die Inszenierung einer Katastrophe: Justinian und der Nika-Aufstand,” *ZPapEpig* 142 (2003): 273–300.

69. Procop. *Pers.* 1.24.24. Excellent analysis of this very important source: H. Börm, *Prokop und die Perser*, *Oriens et Occidens* 16 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007) 267.

70. Greatrex, “The Nika Riot,” 63.

71. Procop. *Pers.* 1.24.22–55.

72. Boyce, “Calendar of Zoroastrian Feasts,” 518.

73. Cf. B. Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4–5.

74. C. Jullien, “Peines et supplices dans les *Actes des Martyrs Persans* et droit sassanide: Nouvelles prospections,” *StudIran* 33 (2004): 243–69; *Mādīgān ī hazār dādistān*, trans. A. Perikhanian.

75. *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 47–48.

76. Procop. *Pers.* 1.11.4–6; Börm, *Prokop und die Perser*, 112–13.

77. The first blinding of an imperial rival occurred in 705 by Justinian II, who himself suffered disfigurement in an attempt to remove him from the throne; O. Lampsidēs, “Ἐ ποινὴ τῆς Τυφλῶσεως παρα Βυζαντινοῖς” (Ph.D. diss., University of Athens, 1949), 14–18.

78. Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 2.270.

79. Agathius 4.3, trans. Frendo, 101.

80. *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 43; B. Moore, Jr., “Cruel and Unusual Punishment in the Roman Empire and Dynastic China,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 14.4 (2001): 729–72. On the mutilation of the hands of usurpers, see M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 48 nn. 54, 56.

81. *Nov. Just.* 134.13; A. Kazhdan, “Mutilation,” *ODB* 2: 1428. Mutilation (and the display of body parts) has often been understood as more “Byzantine” than “late Roman” in terms of its application to the population at large, and indeed it emerges as a commonplace in law books only in the eighth century; however, the bodies of usurpers are a special case and received this treatment relatively early on. E. Patlagean, “Byzance et le blazon pénal,” In *Du châtiment dans la cité: Supplices corporels et peine de mort dans le monde antique*, Collection de l’École Française de Rome 79 (Rome: Palais Farnèse, 1984), 405–27.

Chapters 6 and 7 of J. Harries's *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) touch on this problem, though they focus more on torture as an interrogation technique than on mutilation as punishment and public spectacle.

82. McCormick convincingly demonstrates how the parade, display, and sometimes abuse of the usurper's head became an expected component of victory parades in late antiquity: *Eternal Victory*, 44 n. 40, 45, 48 n. 54; among the many instances: 56, 57, 70, 96.

83. Nikeph. 1.40–41, trans. Mango, 37.

84. I have developed a theoretical vocabulary for the analysis of the role of expressive activity (ritual or visual) in Roman-Sasanian interaction and have termed these two processes *strategic predication* and *appropriation*. As a descriptive tool, I make no claim that this vocabulary is the final word, and hope that others would engage with, critique, and depart from it. *Strategic predication* is a phrase I have taken from James Fernandez's account of the role of metaphor in culture; however, I put the emphasis on (1) the rhetorical act and (2) the calculation behind the process, rather than on the specific metaphorical practices. Fernandez writes that "persuasive metaphors situate us and others with whom we interact" and describes a metaphor as "a strategic predication" that "makes a movement and leads to a performance" (Fernandez, *Persuasions and Performances*, 8). Through a process of strategic metaphoric predication, the opposing court would give the Roman or Sasanian sovereign a new or modified identity through ritual, visual, or discursive manipulation. See Canepa, "Distant Displays of Power."

85. On theorizing royal identity, see Canepa, "Distant Displays of Power."

86. These routes are now by convention referred to as the "Silk Road" from Ferdinand von Richthoffen's *Seidenstrassen*. Exotic material and cultural commodities traveled from west to east as well. As several scholars have pointed out, these routes could be characterized as the "glass route" from the Chinese perspective, given the volume of Roman and Sasanian glass that was traded; however, many other goods, such as silver, traveled eastward on this route as well. F. Thierry, "Sur les monnaies sassanides trouvées en Chine," in *Circulation des monnaies, des marchandises et des biens*, ed. R. Gyselen, *Res Orientales* 5 (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient; Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 89–139; J. Kröger, "Laden with Glass Goods: From Syria via Iraq and Iran to the Famen Temple in China," in *Coins, Art, and Chronology: Essays on the Pre-Islamic History of the Indo-Iranian Borderlands*, ed. M. Alram and D. E. Klimburg-Salter, *DenkWein* 280 (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), 482–91.

87. H. A. Mandanian, *The Trade and Cities of Armenia in Relation to Ancient World Trade*, trans. N. G. Garsoïan (Lisbon: Livraria Bertrand, 1965), 80–82; N. G. Garsoïan, "Artašat," *ODB* 1: 194; E. Winter, "Handel und Wirtschaft in sāsānidischen—(Ost-) römischen Verträgen und Abkommen," *Münstersche Beiträge z. antiken Handelsgeschichte* 6.2 (1987): 46–74; B. A. Litvinsky and Zhang Guang-da, "Historical Introduction," in *History of Civilizations of Cen-*

tral Asia, vol. 3, *The Crossroads of Civilizations: A.D. 250 to 750*, ed. B. A. Litvinsky, co-ed. Zhang Guang-da and R. Shabani Samghabadi (Paris: UNESCO, 1992), 30–32.

88. Preserved in *Cod. Iust.* 4.63.4; Mandanian, *Trade and Cities of Armenia*, 80–82; Garsoïan, “Artašat,” *ODB* 1: 194.

89. Procop. *Pers.* 2.35.1–3; the treaty concluded by Justinian and Kōsrow in 562 continued this trade structure; Menander, frag. 6.1, ed. Blockley, 70.323.

90. Roman attempts to open the route: Menander, frags. 10.1–5, ed. Blockley, 111–27; description of the route: Litvinsky and Zhang Guang-da, “Historical Introduction,” 31; R. N. Frye, “Byzantine and Sasanian Trade Relations with Northeastern Russia,” *DOP* 26 (1972): 263–69; T. Noonan, “The Fur Road and the Silk Road,” in *Kontakte zwischen Iran, Byzanz und der Steppe im 6.-7. Jahrhundert*, ed. C. Bálint, *Varia Archaeologica Hungarica* 9 (Budapest: Varia Archaeologica, 2000), 284–301; bifurcation of the route, initial Kushan dominance, and eventual Sogdian control of the trade: E. de la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders: A History*, *Handbook of Oriental Studies* 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 70–85.

91. M. Morony, “Economic Boundaries? Late Antiquity and Early Islam?” *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient* 47.2 (2004): 184–88; T. Daryaee, “The Persian Gulf Trade in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of World History* 14.1 (2003): 184–88; M. Kordosis, “The Sea Route from China to Ta-Ch’in (Roman-Early Byzantine State) according to the Chinese Sources,” *ByzF* 25 (1999): 47–54; Litvinsky and Zhang Guang-da, “Historical Introduction,” 31.

92. For an overview of this early period in Egypt, Arabia, and Syria, see M. Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze: Palmyra, Edessa, Dura-Europos, Hatra, Oriens et Occidens* 9 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), 139–224, 355–90; M. Sartre, *The Middle East under Rome*, trans. C. Porter and E. Rawlings with J. Routier-Pucci (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 344–63; F. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 B.C.–A.D. 337* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 148–53, 172–73; G. K. Young, *Rome’s Eastern Trade: International Commerce and Imperial Policy, 31 B.C.–A.D. 305* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

93. The treaty of 298: Peter the Patrician, frag. 13; later regulations: *Cod. Iust.* 4.63.4.

94. J. Harmatta, “The Struggle for the ‘Silk Route’ between Iran, Byzantium, and the Türk Empire from 560 to 630 A.D.,” in *Kontakte zwischen Iran, Byzanz und der Steppe*, ed. Bálint, 249–52; S. E. Sidebotham, “Roman Interests in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean,” in *The Indian Ocean in Antiquity*, ed. J. Reade (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 300. For background on Rome’s pre-Sasanian trade with India and China, see V. Begley and R. D. De Puma, eds., *Rome and India: The Ancient Sea Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); B. Dignas and E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 195–209.

95. B. Ward-Perkins, “Specialized Production and Exchange,” *CAH* 14 (2000): 346–91.

96. A. Williams, “Persian Gulf Commerce in the Sasanian Period and the

First Two Centuries of Islam," *Bastan Chenasi va Honar-e Iran/Revue d'Archéologie d'Art Iraniens* 9.10 (1972): 97–98; D. Whitehouse and A. Williamson, "Sasanian Maritime Trade," *Iran* 11 (1973): 29; D. Whitehouse, "Sasanian Maritime Activity," in *The Indian Ocean in Antiquity*, ed. J. Reade (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 339–49; M. Compareti, "The Sasanians in Africa," *Transoxiana* 4 (2002), <http://www.transoxiana.com.ar/0104/sasanians.html>.

97. Whitehouse, "Sasanian Maritime Activity," 346–47. As the Sasanians increasingly dominated the South and Southeast Asian sea routes, the Romans attempted to develop the land routes. In addition to the textual evidence, coins provide vivid archaeological evidence of the drop-off in Roman activity in the Indian Ocean. Compared to the first and second centuries, when the Romans had a foothold in the Indian Ocean trade, more late Roman coins dating from Theodosius II to Heraclius have been found in northern China than in northern Vietnam, the corresponding entry point for the sea routes, reflecting late antique Roman interest in finding ways to bypass the Sasanian monopoly of the middle and southern sea routes; F. Thierry and C. Morrison, "Sur les monnaies Byzantines trouvées en Chine," *RN*, 6th ser., 36 (1994): 109; F. Thierry, "Sur les monnaies sassanides trouvées en Chine," in *Circulation des monnaies*, ed. Gyselen, 89–139; O. Bopearachchi, "La circulation des monnaies d'origine étrangère dans l'antique Sri Lanka," in *Circulation des monnaies*, ed. Gyselen, 63–87; Morony, "Economic Boundaries?" 186.

98. Speaking of Armenia, Procopius states: "The inhabitants of this region, whether subjects of the Romans or of the Persians, have no fear of each other, nor do they give one another any occasion to apprehend an attack, but they even intermarry and hold a common market for their produce and together share the labours of farming." Procop. *Aed.* 3.3.10–11, trans. Dewing. N. Garsoian, "Byzantium and the Sasanians," *CambHistIr* 3.1 (1983): 569–70; id., "The Marzpanate (428–652)," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1, ed. R. G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 95–115. On Armenians and trade between the two realms, see Mandanian, *Trade and Cities of Armenia*, 78–116; R. C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1992), 116–19. Armenian architecture between Rome and Iran: C. Maranci, "Building Churches in Armenia: Art at the Borders of Empire and the Edge of the Canon," *Art Bulletin* 88.4 (2006): 655–75.

99. Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze*, 66–75.

100. E. K. Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 29 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 101–73; J. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qadagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 40 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

101. As Fowden explores more fully, St. Sergius's popularity among the inhabitants of this volatile border area would have been one of the leading motivations for both sovereigns' lavish expressions of interest; Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 130–72.

102. Focusing on this problem, and an entry into the literature: R. Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

103. B. L. Zekiyan, "The Iranian Oikemene and Armenia," *Iran and the Caucasus* 9.2 (2005): 231–44; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 173–95.

104. Several kings of the Laz, both future and deposed, made several trips to the Roman court, beginning with Gubaz I in 465–466, who appeared "dressed in Persian style and with a bodyguard in the Median manner," yet carrying with him "the symbols of the Christians"; Priscus, frag. 33.2, trans. Blockley, 353. From at least the time of Justin I the Roman emperor provided the king of Lazika with his insignia; Procop. *Pers.* 2.15.2–3; N. G. Garsoïan, "Lazika," *ODB* 2: 1199; D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia, 550 B.C.–A.D. 562* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 272.

105. Procop. *Pers.* 2.29.31.

106. The most famous illustration would be the adventures of the young Ardašīr I as represented in the late-Sasanian Ardašīr Romance in which the king is sent to the court of the Parthian king of kings for his royal education and bests the son of the king in the ritualized royal pastimes of chess, polo, and hunting; *Kārnāmag*, ed. Asha, 2.10–22.

107. I. Shahīd, "Lakhmids," *EI* 5: 632–34; id., "Ghassan" *EI* 2: 1020–21; I. Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984), 80–86; id., *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995), 1.1: 32–297; on the role of the Lakhmids as the Sasanians' "hidden hand" in the region, 1.1: 44–46, 1.2: 724–26; on the Ghassanid's elevated status under Heraclius, 1.2: 944. On the border disputes, see W. Kaegi, "Reconceptualizing Byzantium's Eastern Frontiers in the Seventh Century," in *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. W. Mathisen and H. S. Sivan (Ashgate: Variorum, 1996), 85, esp. n. 8. Useful overview and map: Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 166–72.

108. On Roman investiture of the Ghassanids, gift-giving, and the insignia involved, see Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, 1.1: 103–9, 398–406, 518–20; C. E. Bosworth, "Arab i: Arabs and Iran in the Pre-Islamic Period," *Elr* (1987) 2: 201–3; Shahīd, "Ghassan." Again, Fowden's exploration of the cult of St. Sergius is important in understanding the multiple ways the courts attempted to co-opt these tribes; Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 133 and 139–40.

109. Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, 1.1: 28–31; id., *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989), 510–12; G. W. Bowersock, "The Ḥaḍramawt between Persia and Byzantium," in *Persia e Bisanzio*, 263–75. Important primary sources are collected in S. Burstein, ed., *Ancient African Civilizations: Kush and Axum* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), 103–26.

110. Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, 86–104; Bowersock, "The Ḥaḍramawt between Persia and Byzantium," 263–66.

111. Bowersock, "The Ḥaḍramawt between Persia and Byzantium," 263–75.

112. The Huns menaced both the Roman and the Sasanian empires, yet there was still some level of cultural exchange. A little after he had baptized the king of the Lazi, Justin I (during whose reign there seemed to be a rash of client poaching), having earlier won the Hun king, Zilgibi, over to the Romans with gifts and oaths, was extremely displeased to learn that this same king later gave his allegiance to Kawadh; Malal. 414.10–415.11. Later, the queen of the Sabir Huns came over to the Romans, "with many gifts of imperial raiment and a variety of silver vessels and not a little money," and took captive other Hunnic kings who were under Kawadh's control. That same year another Hun king, Grod, who ruled over the remains of the Bosporan kingdom, traveled to Constantinople to be baptized and invested as *rhēx* (*rex*); Malal. 430.13–431.14. In 619 yet another leader (*kyrios*) of the Huns came, with his court entourage in tow, to be baptized and invested by Heraclius; Nikeph. 9, trans. Mango, 51. We can infer the types of insignia and gifts Justinian and Heraclius gave to the Hunnic kings from those Justin I gave the Laz king. The Türk empire especially increased the Roman knowledge of Central Asia and China, as shown in Theoph. Simok. 7.5.6–7.9.12. See D. Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chaps. 7, 8, 10 and 11; T. Noonan, "Byzantium and the Khazars: A Special Relationship?" in *Byzantine Diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin (Ashgate: Variorum, 1990), 109–32, esp. 111–12; W. Felix, "Chionites," *Elr* (1992) 5: 485–87; A. D. H. Bivar, "Hephthalites," *Elr*.

113. Key study: Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders*. See also G. L. Semenov, *Studien zur sogdischen Kultur an der Seidenstrasse* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996), 227–58.

114. Having previously attempted a trade deal in Ctesiphon, where the Sasanians tried to poison him, a Sogdian envoy named Maniakh was responsible for orchestrating the silk trade between Rome and the Turks, bypassing the Sasanian empire. During this episode, the Sogdians identified the Romans as the chief western consumer of silk and conceived of the plan to shift thence the enormous surplus that the Türk empire had amassed from its military victories over China. Menander, frags. 10.1–5, ed. Blockley, 111–27. The Sogdians also appear to have dealt in Sasanian or Sasanian-inspired silver vessels, as the silver objects with typically Sasanian imagery found in the Ob' valley with Sogdian inscriptions or manufacture seem to indicate; Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders*, 227–58, pl. 8.

115. For example, Theoph. Simok. 4.11.2–3.

116. Lydus *Mag.* 2.52 (212.9–29); Josh. Styl. 8; G. Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War, 502–532*, ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 37 (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1998), 14–16.

117. Detailed collection and discussion of the sources relating to Sasanian deportation: E. Kettenhofen, "Deportations II: In the Parthian and Sasanian Period," *Elr*. Balancing Kettenhofen's discussion with greater analysis of Ro-

man population transfers: M. G. Morony, "Population Transfers between Sasanian Iran and the Byzantine Empire," in *Persia e Bisanzio*, 161–79.

118. Among the provinces to which deportees were taken Pārs, Xuzestān, and Asūrestān stand out as receiving repeated infusions of captured peoples under Šāpūr I, Šāpūr II, Qobād I, Ƙosrow I, and Ƙosrow II; with primary sources and bibliography according to period: Kettenhofen, "Deportations"; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 254–63.

119. For example, Šāpūr I and Ƙosrow I both refounded "Antiochs" after their sacks of the city. Šāpūr refounded the city of Gundēšābūhr with Roman captives and named it Weh-andiōg-šābūhr ("The Better Antioch of Šāpūr"); Ṭabarī trans., 38–39. Ƙosrow founded Weh-andiōg-husraw as a suburb of Ctesiphon complete with Roman baths and a hippodrome; Procop. *Pers.* 2.14.1–8; *Anec.* 2.25–29; J. Kröger, "Ctesiphon," *Elr* (1993) 6: 446–48; Börm, *Prokop und die Perser*, 175–77.

120. N. V. Pigulevskaja, *Les villes de l'état iranien aux époques parthe et sassanide: Contribution à l'histoire sociale de la Basse Antiquité*, Documents et Recherches sur l'Économie des Pays Byzantins, Islamiques et Slaves et Leur Relations Commerciales au Moyen Age 6 (Paris and the Hague: Mouton, 1963), 125; M. Dodgeon and S. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 163. For the development of medical schools in the Christian communities in particular, see G. Russell, "Greece x: Greek Medicine in Persia," *Elr* (2003) 11: 342–47. See also N. G. Garsoïan, "Byzantium and the Sasanians," *CambHistIr* 3.1 (1983): 573.

121. The Sasanian empire had its own vibrant, indigenous Nestorian Christian population that eventually subsumed the transfers. Although their overall numbers in the third century might not have been great, these communities were no less resilient in Iran than in the Roman empire, putting down deep roots in some places. The ecclesiastical hierarchy of Antioch was evidently sufficiently intact for its members to elect another bishop in their new home after their deportation; *Chronicle of Se'ert* 221, trans. in Dodgeon and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*, 297; Kettenhoffen, "Deportation." See Morony's analysis of the overall numbers: Morony, "Population Transfers," 167–69. For entry into the extensive scholarship on Christians in the Sasanian empire: Walker, *Legend of Mar Qadagh*. Wider context: I. Gillman and H. J. Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999). W. Hage, *Das Orientalische Christentum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), S. de Courtois, *Chrétiens d'orient sur la route de la soie: dans les pas des nestoriens* (Paris: Table ronde, 2007).

122. *Acts of Pusai* 2, trans. in Dodgeon and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*, 163.

123. For example: "After Justin [I] had reached his end, Chosroes the evil genius invaded the Syrias through Arabia with a vast army, and . . . he burned [Antioch] down, after working incalculable massacre, and indiscriminately looted the statues with which the city was embellished, including marble tablets, carved stones, and paintings, and drove away all Syria to the Persians." Lydus *Mag.* 3.54 (216.16–21), trans. Bandy, 217.

124. Morony, "Population Transfers," 163.

125. In several instances the Romans evacuated Christian populations from regions about to be overrun or handed over to the Sasanians, but apart from a few instances under Diocletian, Constantius II, and Julian, the Romans did not meet with successes that would enable them to transfer populations on a large scale. S. Lieu, "Captives, Refugees, and Exiles: A Study of Cross-Frontier Civilian Movements and Contacts between Rome and Persia from Valerian to Julian," in *The Defense of the Roman East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the University of Sheffield in April 1986*, vol. 2, ed. P. Freeman and D. Kennedy (Oxford: B.A.R., 1986), 487; Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 145.

126. Lieu, "Captives, Refugees, and Exiles," 487.

127. Hrd. 6.4.4–6. The role of the "Achaemenid inheritance" in early Roman and Sasanian polemical interchange is discussed in chapter 4.

128. Diocletian: *Pan. Lat.* 8.21.1; Constantius: *Lib. Or.* 59.83–85.

129. *Not. Dign. or.* 6.32; S. Cosentino, "Iranian Contingents in Byzantine Army," in *Persia e Bisanzio*, 250–51.

130. Procop. *Goth.* 4.26.5–6, 7.3.11; *Pers.* 2.19.24–26; Cosentino, "Iranian Contingents in Byzantine Army," 252–54.

131. *ILS* 2810; Jones, *LRE* 1: 659.

132. Areobindus reportedly took rich booty while plundering Mesopotamia and Persian Armenia in the early sixth-century campaign against Qobād I (Josh. Styl. 55 and 75), the impact of which is evident in the ornament of his consular diptychs and his wife's foundation of St. Polyeuktos; *PLRE*, 2: 143–44. See chapter 9 for in-depth consideration of this phenomenon.

133. C. Foss, "The Persians in the Roman Near East (602–630 A.D.)," *JRAS*, 3rd ser., 13.2 (2003): 149–70.

134. W. Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 207–8.

135. Procop. *Anec.* 25.25–26.

136. *Cod. Iust.* 1.5.18.4 and 1.11.10.2; Malal. 451.16–18. According to Agathius they eventually returned to the Roman empire, protected by a clause in a peace treaty between Justinian and Kōsrow that allowed for their safe passage and freedom to live as they wished as private citizens. As is to be expected from him, Agathius treats with scorn the idea that Kōsrow actually learned anything from them; Agathius *Hist.* 2.28.1–32.5. There is one treatise extant from this sojourn: Priscianus's *Solutiones eorum de quibus dubitavit Chosroes Persarum rex* (Answers to questions posed by Kōsrow, king of the Persians); J. Quicherat, "Solution des problèmes proposés par Chosroès," *BEC*, 3rd ser., 4 (1852): 248–63; Walker, *Legend of Mar Qadagh*, 172–77; id., "The Limits of Late Antiquity: Philosophy between Rome and Iran," *The Ancient World* 33.1 (2002): 45–69; E. Watts, "Where to Live the Philosophical Life in the Sixth Century? Damascius, Simplicius, and the Return from Persia," *GRBS* 45.2 (2005): 285–315.

137. Procop. *Goth.* 8.19.11–15.

138. A Pahlavi tombstone recording the epitaph of the Iranian Christian Xōrdād, who lived for three years in Constantinople studying the "true faith," provides a tangible reminder of the many Christians from Iran who traveled to

Constantinople to learn Greek and complete their education. With previous bibliography: M. N. Bogoliubov, "L'inscription pehlevie de Constantinople," *ActIr* 2 (1974): 2: 291–301; Garsoïan, "Byzantium and the Sasanians," 573. According to Carlo Cereti (personal communication), the shape of the letters in the inscription is very late and should be approached with caution.

139. Garsoïan, "Byzantium and the Sasanians," 571; B. Bennett, "Paul the Persian," *EIr* (2004).

140. M. Heil, "Perser im spätrömischen Dienst," in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, ed. J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, 143–79 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 143–79.

141. Amm. Marc. 16.10.1–17; sources for Hormozd's escape from the Sasanian empire are collected in Dodgeon and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*, 147–49.

142. Amm. Marc. 26.2.4–5; Julian might have intended to install Hormozd as king; Lib. Ep. 1402; Them. Or. 8.116 C; *PLRE* 1: 443.

143. Amm. Marc. 18.5, 18.6.3–4; *PLRE* 1: 74–75; Heil, "Perser im spätrömischen Dienst," 159–65.

144. For example, Justinian I entertained ̲osrow I's envoy Yazd-Gušnasp (rendered Isdigousnas in Procopius) extravagantly and lavished him with gifts; Procop. *Pers.* 2.18.38–44.

145. An exploration of the cultural processes of elite exchange: Canepa, "Distant Displays of Power."

146. Examined in detail in chapters 7 and 8.

147. *De cer.* 1.89, 406–7. This is repeated on a smaller scale if the emperor personally receives the envoy for more private discussions; *De cer.* 1.90, 408–9.

148. For example, ̲osrow I's capture of the hippodrome's symbolic space following upon his capture of Apamea (Procop. *Pers.* 2.11.32); see Börm, *Prokop und die Perser*, 290 n. 7; and below, chapter 7.

149. In the fifth century, both the king of Lazika and the dukes of Greater Armenia, though invested with Roman-style insignia such as the *chlamys* and fibula, wore the Sasanian-derived red leather boots (*tzangia*). In Procopius's time the Roman emperor had adopted these boots, too; Malal. 413.17–18; Procop. *Aed.* 3.1.19–23. See below, chapter 9, for a detailed discussion of royal footwear.

150. Theoph. AM 6015.168.26–27; cf. *Chron. Pasch.* 613–14 and Malal. 413.17–18. Treaties (such as that of 298) indicated explicitly who would have the right to give the king his insignia (*ta symbola*), and that right continued to be contested as Rome and Persia challenged each other's ascendancy over the kingdom; Peter the Patrician, frag. 14, *FHG* 4: 189; Winter, "Handel und Wirtschaft," 47–49.

151. R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler* (Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1929), no. 51.

152. Such an "insignia race" also occurred with the Arab clients of the Romans and Sasanians; E. Chrysos, "The Title *Basileus* in Early Byzantine International Relations," *DOP* 32 (1978): 50–51. More client-king poaching: Malal. 413–16.

153. In certain cases, this could also work the other way. In the Aksumite

kingdom of Ethiopia—which considered itself on equal footing with Rome—a Greek inscription was set up in the harbor city of Adulis extolling the deeds of a king. Its audience was presumably Roman merchants and diplomats, and accordingly it was copied and included in a text based on the experiences of the late antique merchant Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographia christiana* (= *Topographie chrétienne*, 3 vols., ed. and trans. W. Wolska-Conus, with a preface by P. Lemerle [Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1968–73]). Similar inscriptions were excavated and studied by the German archaeological mission: E. Littmann, *Sabaische, griechische und altabessinische Inschriften*, Deutsche Axumexpedition 4 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1913); D. W. Johnson, “Axum,” *ODB* 1: 239; D. W. Phillipson, *Ancient Ethiopia: Aksum, Its Antecedents and Successors* (London: British Museum Press, 1998). The diplomatic reception ceremony and gifting customs at the Aksumite court were very similar to those that existed between the Roman and Sasanian courts if Malalas’s account is true. Considering that Aksum received embassies from both powers and strove for a higher international profile, it is no surprise that the Aksumite kings were conversant with the “standard” international protocol for the day; Malal. 457.

154. Menander, frag. 10.3, ed. Blockley, 122–23.

3. THE LURE OF THE OTHER AND THE LIMITS OF THE PAST

1. L. Vanden Berghe, “L’héritage parthe dans l’art sassanide,” in *Transitional Periods in Iranian History: Actes du Symposium de Fribourg-en-Brisgau* (22–24 mai 1985), *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 5 (Leuven: Association pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 1987), 241–52, esp. 229. Specifically on the equestrian duel: H. von Gall, *Das Reiterkampfbild in der iranischen und iranisch beeinflussten Kunst parthischer und sasanidischer Zeit*, *Teheraner Forschungen* 6 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1990); id., “Die Reiterkampfszene auf der Silbervase von Kosika: Ursprünge und Rezeption eines iranisches Motivs in Südrußland,” *AMI* 29 (1997): 243–69.

2. R. M. Schneider, “Die Faszination des Feindes: Bilder der Parther und des Orients in Rom,” in *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse*, ed. J. Wiesehöfer, *Historia Einzelschriften* 122 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998), 95–146; A. C. Levi, *Barbarians on Roman Imperial Coins and Sculpture*, *Numismatic Notes and Monographs* 123 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1952). Extensive consideration, from a formal standpoint, of the predecessors of the last great Roman triumphal arch before the advent of the Sasanians: R. Brilliant, *The Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum*, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 29 (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1967); a large, yet undifferentiated catalogue of “barbarians” in Roman art: A.-M. Forgét, “The Roman Captive: An Iconographic and Cultural Study” (master’s thesis, University of Victoria, 1996), 138–217.

3. R. M. Schneider, “Orientalism in Late Antiquity: The Oriental in Imperial and Christian Imagery,” in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen*

zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt, ed. J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, *Oriens et Occidens* 13 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 241–78; id., “Die Faszination des Feindes,” 98; id., “Barbar II (ikonographisch),” *RAC supplement* 1 (1992): 895–918.

4. “Das Gegenbild des Barbaren war grundsätzlich asymmetrisch, d.h. der Gegensatz auf ungleiche Weise konträr. In der Asymmetrie des barbarischen Gegenbildes manifestiert sich die kulturelle Konstruktion von Fremdheit und Andersheit besonders deutlich.” Schneider, “Die Faszination des Feindes,” 95; see also 102–3, and 106–10; H. Sonnabend, *Fremdbild und Politik: Vorstellung der Römer von Ägypten und dem Partherreich in der späten Republik und frühen Kaiserzeit*, Europäische Hochschulschriften 3.286 (Frankfurt, Bern, and New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 197–289; P. Zanker, “Die Gegenwelt der Barbaren und die Überhöhung der häuslichen Lebenswelt,” in *Gegenwelten: Zu den Kulturen Griechenlands und Roms in der Antike*, ed. T. Hölscher (Munich: Leipzig, 2000), 409–33; C. B. Rose, “The Parthians in Augustan Rome,” *AJA* 109.1 (2005): 21–76; J. Wiesehöfer, *Iraniens, grecs et romains* (Paris: Association pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2005), 111–46.

5. Schneider, “Die Faszination des Feindes,” 95–146; id., “Barbar II,” 918–22; Rose, “Parthians in Augustan Rome,” 21–76.

6. Cass. Dio 54.8.1–3. Popularity in Roman visual culture beyond imperial production: P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. A. Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 187.

7. Zanker, *Power of Images*, 189; Schneider, “Die Faszination des Feindes,” 97–99.

8. Cass. Dio 54.8; Zanker, *Power of Images*, 189; E. Nedergaard, “Arcus Augusti,” *LTUR* 1: 81–85.

9. Zanker, *Power of Images*, 186–87; Rose, “Parthians in Augustan Rome,” 22 n. 11.

10. Rose, “Parthians in Augustan Rome,” 64–67.

11. Schneider, “Die Faszination des Feindes,” 95–96. Zanker, *Power of Images*, 189.

12. Tac. *Ann.* 15.18.1; represented on *sestertii* issued from the Roman mint in 64 and Lugdunum in 65–67; F. S. Kleiner, “Arcus Neronis,” *LTUR* 1: 101; Schneider, “Die Faszination des Feindes,” 100.

13. Cass. Dio 63.1; Suet. *Ner.* 13.

14. Cass. Dio 63.4.3–5.4, trans. E. Cary.

15. Cf. J. Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 54.

16. M. Griffin, “Nerva to Hadrian,” *CAH* 9 (2000): 125.

17. Schneider, “Die Faszination des Feindes,” 101; id., “Barbar II,” 922–24; H. Gabelmann, *Antike Audienz- und Tribunalszenen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 170–75.

18. *RIC* 2: 291, no. 667.

19. R. Brilliant, “Arcus: Septimius Severus (Forum),” *LTUR* 1: 104.

20. Brilliant, *Arch of Septimius Severus*, 151–65.

21. Ibid., 137–47, 181–82; Gabelmann, *Antike Audienz- und Tribunalszenen*, 177.
22. R. M. Schneider, "Friend and Foe: The Orient in Rome," in *The Age of the Parthians*, ed. V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 50–79; id., "Die Faszination des Feindes," 116–18.
23. Ibid., 104–5.
24. Gabelmann, *Antike Audienz- und Tribunalszenen*, 142–47.
25. Schneider, "Barbar II," 924–56; id., "Orientalism in Late Antiquity," 243.
26. Schneider, "Barbar II," 954. For a catalogue overview of some of these images, see K. M. Irwin, "The Liturgical and Theological Correlations in the Associations of Representations of the Three Hebrews and the Magi in the Christian Art of Late Antiquity" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1985).
27. R. Favaro, "Sull'iconografia bizantina della stella dei Magi di Betlemme," in *Persia e Bisanzio*, 827–64. Schneider, "Barbar II," 954–55; id., "Orientalism in Late Antiquity," 247–52. See below, chapter 6.
28. An extremely important contribution drawn from the author's rich knowledge as the excavator and surveyor of these sites: D. Huff, "Formation and Ideology of the Sasanian State in the Context of Archaeological Evidence," in *The Sasanian Era*, ed. V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart, *The Idea of Iran 3* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 30–59.
29. Gall, *Das Reiterkampfbild*, 11–19, with older literature; M. Boyce, "Gō-darz," *Elr*; id., "Gotarzes Geopothros, Artabanus III, and the Kingdom of Hyrcania," in *Variatio delectat: Iran und der Westen (Gedenkschrift für Peter Calmeyer)* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), 155–66. Darius I, Bisotūn: M. Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art*, ActIr 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 182–226.
30. G. Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on Its Origins* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 136–37.
31. A. Kazhdan, "Historiography," *ODB* 2: 937.
32. B. Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 27–37.
33. "The rigid dictates of *taxis* were tempered by compromise or *oikonomia* imposed by circumstances and opposed to the most abhorrent phenomenon to the Byz., *ataxia*, or disorder, which was reckoned characteristic of barbarians or *demokratia*. *Taxis* helps to explain why Byzantium depicted itself as unchanging; change meant divergence from the established order, thus reform could be represented only as return to the original ancient *taxis* (e.g. Justinian, vol. 59, 326.25–7)." M. McCormick, "Taxis," *ODB* 3: 2018.
34. *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 37 and 47.
35. For an excellent consideration of discursive interventions in cultural memory under Justinian, see Michael Maas's study *John Lydus and the Roman Past: Antiquarianism and Politics in the Age of Justinian* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).
36. "Site of memory," or *lieu de mémoire*, has become a common critical term in discussions of issues of the past and historical memory. My usage of

the term applies only to the late antique world and does not seek to import any of the term's connotations in contemporary discourse, where such sites function as symbols of modern society's alienation from its past. In the late antique world a site of memory was a portal to the past and the means by which the two emperors actively participated in cultural memory. The work of several historians, anthropologists, and cultural theorists is broadly useful in reconstructing the role that sites and rituals played in providing the Romans and Sasanians with a tangible and useful connection with the past, though none speaks directly to the late antique experience. For a discussion of the literature, see M. Canepa, "The Two Eyes of the Earth: Competition and Exchange in the Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004), 65.

37. F. Vittinghoff, "Zum geschichtliche Selbstverständnis der Spätantike," *HZ* 198 (1964): 529–74, esp. 573; M. Fuhrmann, "Die Romidee der Spätantike," *HZ* 207 (1973): 529–51; Kazhdan, "Historiography."

38. T. Daryaee, "Memory and History: The Construction of the Past in Late Antique Persia," *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 1.2 (2001–2002): 1–14; E. Yarshater, "Introduction," *CambHistIr* 3.1 (1982): xx; J. P. de Menasce, "Zoroastrian Pahlavī Writings," *CambHistIr* 3.2 (1983): 1166–69.

39. Although not considered "ancestors" themselves by the Sasanians, the Hellenistic/Parthian-era "Frataraka" dynasty developed attitudes toward the past and a general pattern of ritual-visual practices relating to vestiges of the past that should be kept in mind when considering a precursor or precedent in the region that might have indirectly influenced Sasanian practice; K. Schippmann, *Die iranischen Feuerheiligtümer* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1971), 177–85; J. Wiesehöfer, *Die dunklen Jahrhunderte der Persis: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Kultur von Fars in frühhellenistischer Zeit (330–149 v. Chr.)*, *Zetemata* 90 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1994), 105–8; A. Panaino, "The Bagān of the Fratarakas: Gods or 'Divine' Kings," in *Religious Themes and Texts of Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia*, ed. C. Cereti, M. Maggi, and E. Provasi (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2003), 265–88; A. de Jong, "Vexillologica sacra: Searching the Cultic Banner," in *Religious Themes and Texts*, ed. Cereti et al., 191–202.

40. On the Achaemenids' relationship with the Avesta, see P. O. Skjærvø, "The Achaemenids and the Avesta," in *The Birth of the Persian Empire*, ed. V. S. Curtis and E. Stewart (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 53–81; A. de Jong, "The Contribution of the Magi," in *Birth of the Persian Empire*, ed. Curtis and Stewart, 85–99. See also Daryaee, "Memory and History," 4–5; id., "National History or Keyanid History? The Nature of Sasanid Zoroastrian Historiography," *Iranian Studies* 28 (1995): 140; M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), 127–28; E. Yarshater, "Iranian National History," *CambHistIr* 3.1 (1982): 369; Gnoli, *Idea of Iran*, 136–37 and 178.

41. The Avestan mythology provided a powerful and useful prototype for an aspiring heroic ruler in any era: "(We worship the mighty Kavyan Glory) which

came over / to Kauui Haosrauuah / with regard to his well-formed impetuousness, / with regard to his victoriousness created by Ahura (Mazdā), / with regard to his overcoming superiority, / with regard to his well-issued order(s), / with regard to his unshakable order (s), / with regard to his irresistible order(s), / with regard to having defeated his enemies at one stroke [. . .]” *Zamyād Yašt* 19.74, trans. Humbach and Ichaporia, 147.

42. M. Grignaschi, “Quelques spécimens de la littérature sassanide conservés dans les bibliothèques d’Istanbul,” *JA* 254 (1966): 68–128.

43. For discussion of the literature, see Canepa, “Competition and Exchange,” 69.

44. Our understanding of the Achaemenid dynasty stems largely from Darius I’s inscriptions. Darius, however, was engaged in a calculated propaganda campaign to legitimate his usurpation even to the point of manufacturing an “Achaemenes” as a common ancestor. No Iranian sources remember the Achaemenids as the Achaemenids, and it appears that this is because no Achaemenid rulers before or after Darius I did either. R. Frye, “Darius the Liar and Shapur the Heritor,” in *The Spirit of Wisdom (Mēnōg ī Xrad)*, ed. T. Daryaee (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2004), 77–82; id., “The Missing Achaemenids,” in *Paitimāna: Essays in Iranian, Indo-European, and Indian Studies in Honor of Hans-Peter Schmidt*, ed. Siamak Adhami, vol. 2 (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 350–54; id., “Cyrus Was No Achaemenid,” in *Religious Themes and Texts*, ed. Cereti et al., 111–14.

45. A challenging piece of scholarship, M. R. Shayegan, “Aspects of Early Sasanian History and Historiography” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1999), provides an excellent account of the sources and previous debate. See also G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 29. On the Sasanians’ predecessors in Pārs, see J. Wiesehöfer, “Fars under Seleucid and Parthian Rule,” in *The Parthian Era*, ed. V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 37–49.

46. With copious bibliography: E. J. Keal, “Bišāpūr,” *Elr* (1990) 4: 287–89.

47. R. Gyselen, “Ērān-xwarrah-Šābūhr,” *Elr* (1990) 8: 537; id., “Ērān-xwarrah-Yazdgerd,” *Elr* (1990) 8: 537; M. G. Morony, “Beh-Qobād,” *Elr* (1990) 4: 109.

48. J. Kröger, “Ctesiphon,” *Elr* (1993) 6: 446–48.

49. Kōsrow II began a monumental rock relief at Bīsotūn, the site of Darius I’s monumental rock relief, making him the last Sasanian to carve a relief at an Achaemenid site, though work on the relief was cut short by Heraclius’s invasion and Kōsrow II’s subsequent murder. H. Luschey, “Bistotūn ii: Archaeology,” *Elr* (1990) 4: 291–99.

50. Tabarī trans., 410 (not the temple in Ardašīr-Xwarrah).

51. The title of *restitutor urbis* is known from coins and inscriptions (*CIL* 3: 3731; 8: 10118, 10401). Eighteen interventions are mentioned in the SHA, of which eight are securely corroborated, five with probability, leaving only four open, but according to Coarelli, only because of insufficient archaeological documentation. F. Coarelli, “La situazione edilizia di Roma sotto Severo Alessan-

dro," in *L'urbs: Espace urbain et Histoire (Ier siècle av. J.C.–IIIe siècle ap. J.-C.)*, Collection de l'École Française de Rome 98 (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1987), 429, 440, and 444.

52. With parallels to Augustus's artificial reinvigoration: Zanker, *Power of Images*, 101–238.

53. For a detailed examination of Severus Alexander's program, see Canepa, "Competition and Exchange," 88–102.

54. For example, this period of usurpations produced lasting developments in the use and understanding of imperial victory rituals. During this period the rituals of the triumph became detached from Rome's urban environment and, while they still took place there, effectively followed the emperor wherever he went. Aspects of Roman victory celebrations were disseminated throughout Italy and the provinces, the most striking example being the hundreds of triumphal arches that became commonplace in any reasonably important Roman city and the yearly commemorations inscribed into Roman calendars, the latter being a more durable element in late antique imperial practice. M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 11–34.

55. After his accession, Severus Alexander's usurper, Maximinus (235–238), did not deem it necessary to travel to Rome for senatorial ratification. Instead he sent large *eikones*—possibly a statue group—representing his victory over the Germanic tribes, which were set up by the Curia (Hdn. 7.2.8). Before Gordian III left for the border on his Persian campaign, he opened the doors of the temple of Janus—the last time this ceremony would be celebrated; M. Silvestrini, "Il potere imperiale da Severo Alessandro ad Aureliano," in *Storia di Roma*, vol. 3, 1, ed. A. Carandini, L. Cracco Ruggini, and A. Giardina (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1993), 157 and 166. Imperial cult: D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire*, vol. 3, *Provincial Cult*, pt. 1, *Institution and Evolution*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 145 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 197–212; S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 59–60.

56. Cf. Hdn. 1.6.3–6 and *Pan. Lat.* 11.12.1–2: *ut ibi tunc esse sedes imperii videretur quo uterque venerat imperator*. E. Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist: Untersuchungen zu den Staatsdenkmälern des dezentralisierten Reiches von Diocletian bis zu Theodosius II*, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Forschungsinstitut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte Monographien 53 (Mainz: Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Press, 2002), 1.

57. The five-column decennial monument added to the area of the *rostra* in the Roman Forum and the *arcus novus* on the *via Lata* in the general vicinity of Augustus's altars and Aurelian's *templum Solis*; Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, 175–83; A. Pulte, "Rostra: "Fünfsäulendenkmal," *LTUR* 4: 218–19. Two porphyry columns with the Tetrarchs in high relief, now in the Vatican Library, were found in the vicinity of Aurelian's temple and could have been another Tetrarchic architectural appropriation of the area; R. Delbrueck, *Antike*

Porphyrywerke, Studien zur Spätantiken Kunstgeschichte im Auftrage des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts 6 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1932), 92.

58. Fundamental study: M. Cullhed, *Conservator urbis suae: Studies in the Politics and Propaganda of the Emperor Maxentius*, Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Rom 8.20 (Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1994), 11; see also O. Hekster, "The City of Rome in Late Imperial Ideology: The Tetrarchs, Maxentius, and Constantine," *MedAnt* 2.2 (1999): 717–48.

59. Foremost of these audacious displays of *Romanitas* were his rebuildings or restoration, and thus appropriation, of the temple of Venus and Rome; his massive basilica, thought to be the *aula* of the urban prefect; and his rotunda in the Roman Forum, commonly called the temple of Romulus, and now thought to be a temple to the *lares* of the *gens Valeria*. Maxentius rebuilt or added to several of the city's palaces and baths, including the Severan baths on the Palatine and the Lateran Palace, where he built an exedra to showcase a bronze she-wolf. On the *via Appia* he built a suburban palace complex with a circus and, more importantly, a mausoleum for his son, inspired architecturally by the Pantheon. Cullhed, *Politics and Propaganda of the Emperor Maxentius*, 55–57; E. Papi, "Romulus, Divus, Templum (Tempio di Romolo)," *LTUR* 4: 210–12; G. Ioppolo and G. P. Sartorio, *La Villa di Massenzio sulla via Appia: Il circo, I Monumenti Romani* 9 (Rome: Editore Colombo, 1999); J. Rasch, *Das Maxentius-Mausoleum an der Via Appia in Rom*, Spätantike Zentralbauten in Rome and Latium 1 (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1984).

60. Cullhed, *Politics and Propaganda of the Emperor Maxentius*, 11.

61. E. Marlowe, "Framing the Sun: The Arch of Constantine and the Appropriation of the Roman Cityscape," *Art Bulletin* 88 (2006): 223–42; E. D. Hunt, "Imperial Building at Rome: The Role of Constantine," in *Bread and Circuses: Euergetism and Municipal Patronage in Roman Italy*, ed. K. Lomas and T. Cornell (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 105–24, esp. 106–7; R. Leeb, *Konstantin und Christus: Der Verchristlichung der imperialen Repräsentation unter Konstantin dem Großen als Spiegel seiner Kirchenpolitik und seines Selbstverständnisses als christlicher Kaiser*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 58 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992).

62. Though it does not address those relating to urban and artistic environments, see Maas, *John Lydus and the Roman Past*, for the role of other "sites of memory," such as the bureaucracy, laws, and the imperial office in the age of Justinian. These sites parallel the emperor's remaking of Constantinople's urban environment in shaping Roman identity and its relationship to its various pasts.

63. M. Vitiello, "La vicenda dell'obelisco lateranense tra versione ufficiale e tradizione senatoria: Magnenzio, Costanzo e il senato di Roma," *MedAnt* 2.1 (1999): 359–408; P. Verduchi, "Columna Phocae," *LTUR* 1: 307. Also for Phokas's (vicarious) interaction with Roman urban ritual: M. R.-Alföldi, "Die Bedeutung des Repraesentationsbildes in der Spätantike," in *Mélanges de numismatique, d'archéologie et d'histoire offerts à Jean Lafaurie* ed. P. Bastien et al. (Paris: Société Française de Numismatique, 1980), 37–40. For the later reuse of the city's topography, imperial, Gothic, and papal, see P. Pensabene, "Monumenti di

Roma tra continuità e perdita di funzione: Trasformazione urbana e reimpiego in età tardo-antico," *MedAnt* 2.2 (1999): 749–76.

64. Hdn. 6.2.2, trans. Dodgeon and Lieu, 16.

65. Ṭabarī 814, trans. Bosworth, 3.

66. Presenting contrasting views: P. Huyse, "La revendication de territoires Achéménides par les Sassanides: Une réalité historique," *Cahiers de Studia Iranica* 25 (2002): 297–311; and Daryaee, "Memory and History."

67. Key to this tradition were the works of Xenophon and Herodotus, supplemented by Hellenistic authors like Arrian, all of whom Roman authors such as Strabo and Plutarch consulted. Combined with knowledge gained from Achaemenid royal inscriptions and archaeological material, this is the general strain from which modern scholarship descends, and generally holds to be the true.

68. Daryaee, "National History or Keyanid History?" 132–33; id., "Sasanians and Their Ancestors," in *Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europaea, Held in Ravenna, 6–11 October 2003*, ed. A. Panaino and A. Piras (Milan: Mimesis, 2005), 1: 287–93. While I would widen his approach to consider the possibility of Sasanian refashioning of a merged Kayānid/Achaemenids dynasty, Huyse's is an important study of oral tradition in Sasanian Iran: P. Huyse, "Late Sasanian Society between Orality and Literacy," in *Sasanian Era*, ed. Curtis and Stewart, 140–55.

69. Nor, perhaps, did anyone else do so either until Darius I; Frye, "Cyrus Was No Achaemenid," 111–14; id., "Missing Achaemenids," 350–54; Daryaee, "National History or Keyanid History?" 132–33.

70. "And the [captured soldiers] that came from the kingdom of Rome, from *Anērān*, we deported to *Ērānšahr*: to Pārs, Pahlaw, Xuzestān and Asūrestān and other lands, where we, [our] father, [our] grandfathers and [our] ancestors held property, [and there] they [were] settled." ŠKZ 30; G. Gnoli, "L'inscription de Šābuhr à la Ka'be-ye Zardošt et la propagande sassanide," in *Histoire et cultes de l'Asie centrale préislamique: Sources écrites et documents archéologiques*, ed. P. Bernard and F. Grenet (Paris: Éditions du C.N.R.S., 1991), 58–59.

71. For example, Šāpūr I's Ka'ba-ye Zardošt (ŠKZ 30) or Narseh's Paikuli inscription (NPi, B1.03-B3–4.04). Gnoli, "L'inscription de Šābuhr à la Ka'be-ye Zardošt"; Shayegan, "Sasanian History and Historiography," 83–92. An important fact: while no early Sasanian king mentions the Achaemenids as ancestors in a primary source, no primary source attests to an early Sasanian king claiming the Kayānids as ancestors either. Evidence for early Sasanian understandings of their descent come from secondary and tertiary sources that reflect the later official history (the *Xwadāy-nāmag*), such as the *Šāhnāma* or Ṭabarī. The Achaemenids are always the link between the Kayānids and Sasanian dynasty in them.

72. If Ardašīr I had not already gained an understanding of the classical tradition from his forays into the Roman East, Šāpūr I must surely have gained an understanding of the Romans' idea of the Achaemenids and their place in the literary and ideological imagination of the Romans from the deported elite of Antioch if not from the mouth of the captured Roman emperor Valerian. The

biblical tradition of Jews (and Christians for that matter) living in the Sasanian empire could have been additional source of information about the Achaemenids; Daryaee, “National History or Keyanid History?” 132–33.

73. Daryaee, “National History or Keyanid History?” 134–37.

74. F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 28–46, 61, 119, and 170–73; T. D. Barnes, “The Composition of Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*,” *Phoenix* 38 (1984): 240–55; G. Alföldy, “Cassius Dio und Herodian: Über die Anfänge des neupersischen Reiches,” *RhM* 114 (1971): 360–66; R. Bering-Statschewski, *Römische Zeitgeschichte bei Cassius Dio*, Bochumer Historische Studien, Alte Geschichte 5 (Bochum: Studienverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1981), 112–13; Shayegan, “Sasanian History and Historiography,” 93.

75. Cass. Dio 80.4.1, trans. Foster, 109.

76. Hdn. 6.2.2.

77. Interestingly, Dio’s record of Ardašīr I’s communication uses the same word for ancestors—*progonoi*—that the translator of the Greek version of the ŠKZ chose to translate the Mid. Pers. word for ancestors—*ahēnagān*. In both cases these *ahēnagān/progonoi* are equally unspecified. Šapur’s ŠKZ 30; Gnoli *Idea of Iran*, 119 n. 24; Wiesehöfer, *Die dunklen Jahrhunderte der Persis*, 392.

78. E. Kettenhofen, “Die Einforderung des Achämenidenerbes durch Ardašīr: Eine Interpretatio romana,” *OLP* 15 (1984): 177–90.

79. Augustus’s construction of the inferior Oriental despotism of the Parthians and later Roman attempts to recoup this in light of Parthian victories: Sonnabend, *Fremdbild und Politik*, 197–289; art, historically: Zanker, *Power of Images*, 183–95. Tacitus claims that in 35 B.C.E. the Parthian king Ardawān II, along with other bellicose behavior, “added menacing boasts about the old frontiers of the Persian and Macedonian empires, promising to seize the lands that Cyrus and Alexander had ruled.” Tac. *Ann.* 6.31, trans. M. Grant, *The Annals of Imperial Rome* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 216; J. Wolski, “Sur l’authenticité des traités romano-perses,” *IrAnt* 27 (1992): 176–79. There is also compelling evidence in Parthian primary sources (namely, cuneiform tablets from the Parthian chancellery in Babylon) that self-consciously resurrect old Babylonian titles such as “great king” and “king of lands” next to the Achaemenid title “king of kings”; Shayegan, “Sasanian History and Historiography,” 140–43.

80. Hdn. 6.2.4.

81. Shayegan, “Sasanian History and Historiography,” 189–201.

82. While it would be tempting to base wider claims on the symbolism of the name Alexander, the available evidence indicates that Severus Alexander or his image makers never sought to appropriate the name or legacy of Alexander for anything other than an attempt to bolster Severus Alexander’s manufactured filiation with the Alexander-mad Caracalla. E. Kettenhofen, *Die syrischen Augustae in der historischen Überlieferung*, *Antiquitas* 3.24 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1979), 25–28 and 36–37; F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.–A.D. 337* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 141–59.

83. D. S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay: A.D. 180–395* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 229.

84. J. D. Breckenridge, *Likeness: A Conceptual History of Portraiture* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 214.

85. A. Alföldi, "The Crisis of the Empire," *CAH* 12 (1939): 182–83.

86. T. Daryaee, "Imitatio Alexandri and Its Impact on Late Arsacid, Early Sasanian, and Middle Persian Literature," *Electrum* 12 (2007): 89–94.

87. Amm. Marc. 17.5.5. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 28–29.

88. Zonar. 13.9.25–31, trans. M. H. Dodgeon, in M. Dodgeon and S. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 229–30; Potter, *Roman Empire at Bay*, 223.

89. *Kār-nāmag*, ed. Asha, 1.6 and 3.19; Ṭabarī 814, trans. Bosworth, 3; ŠN, trans. Levy, 252–62.

90. "New Cyrus": *Synodicon orientale, ou, Recueil de synodes nestoriens*, ed. J. B. Chabot (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1901), 320; J. Walker, "'Your Heroic Deeds Give us Pleasure!' Culture and Society in the Christian Martyr Legends of Late Antique Iraq" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1998), 12; Agathius 4.6. For the influence of Sasanian ideology on Nestorian attitudes in general, see U. Monneret de Villard, *Le leggende orientali dei Magi Evangelici*, Studi e Testi 163 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1952), 119–56.

91. Daryaee, "Imitatio Alexandri," 89–94; Yarshater, "Iranian National History," 3.1: 472.

92. Clear statements acknowledging the change in regime: Cass. Dio 80.4.1; Hdn. 6.2.1, 6.3.4. See also Potter, *Roman Empire at Bay*, 226–29; Millar, *Roman Near East*, 148.

93. B. Dignas and E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 18–19.

94. These include such traditional types as winged Victories, the emperor holding a spear and globe, Jupiter ready to hurl a thunderbolt, and Mars striding, holding a spear and legends such as *VICTORIA AUGUSTI*, *IOVI PROPUGNATORI*, *MARTI PROPUGNATORI*, and *PAX AETERNA AUGUSTI*; RIC 4.2, nos. 164, 201, 324, 652; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 77.

95. SHA *Sev. Alex.* 56–57.3.

96. Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 19.

97. It is possible that a Roman prototype inspired Ardašīr I's symmetrical investiture relief at Naqš-e Rostam insofar as it reflects Roman imperial sculptural expressions, most notably Marcus Aurelius's equestrian statue. However, trampling a captive was an old idea in the Near East, and the symmetrical equestrian investiture originated with Ardašīr. The idea of the horse trampling the enemy, if actually of Roman derivation, would appear to be more of an inspiration than direct and pointed appropriation. H. Luschei, "Iran und der Westen von Kyros bis Khosrow," *AMI* n.s. 1 (1968): 33–34.

98. Equestrian victory over Ardawān IV: Fīrūzābād relief 1; Ardawān IV trampled: Naqš-e Rostam relief 1.

99. Submission of the Armenians: Salmās.

100. Fīrūzābād relief 2, Naqš-e Rajāb relief 3; Naqš-e Rostam relief 1.

4. ŠĀPŪR I, KING OF KINGS OF IRAN AND NON-IRAN

1. On the ruptures and changes in early Sasanian kingship, see T. Daryaee, "Kingship in Early Sasanian Iran," in *The Sasanian Era*, ed. V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart, *The Idea of Iran* 3 (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 60–68.

2. B. Dignas and E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 78.

3. In an intriguing aside, the SHA (*Gord.* 34.2–5) records that Gordian's soldiers built him a cenotaph at Circesium in Sasanian territory that they inscribed in Greek, Latin, Egyptian, Hebrew, and Persian. It reportedly read: *Divo Gordiano, victori Persarum, victori Gothorum, victori Sarmatarum, depulsori Romanarum seditionum, victori Germanorum, sed non victori Philipporum*. Like much of the SHA, the wording of the inscription is likely fictitious, but Ammianus (23.5.7) reports seeing the *tumulus* itself. The multiple languages used appear to appropriate or at least refer to the imperial statement inherent in the ŠKZ; however, whether the actual monument bore such inscriptions or this connection existed only in the mind of the SHA's author is unknown.

4. Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 22–23.

5. ŠKZ 18–23; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 23.

6. E. Kettenhofen, "Deportations ii: In the Parthian and Sasanian Periods," *Elr* (1996) 7: 297–308; A. Luther, "Roms mesopotamische Provinzen nach der Gefangennahme Valerians," in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, ed. J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, *Oriens et Occidens* 13 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 202–19.

7. ŠKZ 1–5; G. Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on Its Origins* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 122–23 and 129–83; T. Daryaee, "The Changing 'Image of the World': Geography and Imperial Propaganda in Ancient Persia," in *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient World*, *Electrum* 6, ed. E. Dąbrowa (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2002), 102–6. For a different view, see A. S. Shahbazi, "The History of the Idea of Iran," in *The Birth of the Persian Empire*, ed. V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 100–111.

8. Gnoli, *Idea of Iran*, 129. Ardašīr's titulature is known from the inscription on his Naqš-e Rostam relief. The phrase *šāhān šāh ī Ērān ud Anērān* appears on coins for the first time under Šāpūr's son, Hormozd I. It is possible that Šāpūr himself carved his father's inscription at Naqš-e Rostam, which would suggest that he was not just responsible for the distinction between the nature of his and his father's kingship and the conceptual leap between *šāhān šāh ī Ērān* and *šāhān šāh ī Ērān ud Anērān* but for defining his father's kingship to begin with, thus making him responsible for the bulk of this development in Iranian kingship.

9. R. N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1984), 298–99.

10. ŠKZ 1–5; Gnoli, *Idea of Iran*, 122–23 and 129–83. For the later imperial manipulations of this concept, see T. Daryaee, "Ethnic and Territorial Boundaries in Late Antique and Early Medieval Persia (Third to Tenth Century)," in *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Mid-*

dle Ages, ed. F. Curta (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 123–37; for late, religiously-minded use of these terms as reflected in the Pahlavi literature, see S. Shaked, “Religion in the Late Sasanian Period: Eran, Aneran, and Other Religious Designations,” in *Sasanian Era*, ed. Curtis and Stewart, 102–17.

11. “And [Philip the] *Kēsar* came to us as a suppliant and gave us 500,000 *dēnārs* as ransom [for the army’s] lives, and became a tributary to us.” ŠKZ 8. As Z. Rubin notes, the theme that Rome became subject to Ērānšāhr under Šāpūr I was incorporated into the *Xwadāy-nāmag* and preserved in the *Šāhnāma*; Z. Rubin, “The Roman Empire in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*—The Mediterranean World in Sasanian Propaganda,” in *Ancient Iran and the Mediterranean World*, ed. E. Dąbrowa, Electrum 2 (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 1998), 178. Contrast this with E. Chrysos, “Some Aspects of Roman-Persian Legal Relations,” *Kleronomia* 8 (1976): 7–11, who attempted to reconstruct some sort of legal distinction in the inscription between the Romans and other nations that were merely listed.

12. Rubin, “Roman Empire in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*,” 177–85; again, contrast with Chrysos, “Roman-Persian Legal Relations.”

13. Rubin, “Roman Empire in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*,” 178 and 180.

14. Šāpūr I’s successors adopted his innovation, and the phrase continued to be used on coins until Yazdegerd II (439); M. R. Shayegan, “Approaches to the Study of Sasanian History,” In *Paitimāna: Essays in Iranian, Indo-European, and Indian Studies in Honor of Hans-Peter Schmidt*, ed. Siamak Adhami (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 370.

15. NPi 91, H1.03–H6.05; Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 71.

16. NPi 92, H16.02–H17.02; Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 70 and glossary, 106; Rubin, “Roman Empire in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*,” 181–82.

17. The ŠKZ records that the king of kings settled Roman prisoners in Fārs, and Ebn Qotayba names Bīšāpūr as one of the places they were specifically taken; *al-Ma’āref*, ed. T. Akkāšah (Cairo, 1960), 644; E. J. Keall, “Bīšāpūr,” *Elr* (1990) 4: 287–89; sources collected in R. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Châpour: Bîchâpour* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste, 1956), 2: 9–20.

18. Bīšāpūr was built on a grid plan, a marked departure from the circular city plan of Ardašīr’s cities of Ardašīr-Xwarrah and Weh-Ardašīr. Roman masons’ marks have been discerned on Bīšāpūr masonry, and Roman mosaic techniques and motifs have been recognized in Bīšāpūr’s “palace” mosaics from the start. Ghirshman, *Bîchâpour*, 2: 21–43.

19. “At Shushtar there was a river so wide that even the fish could not traverse it, and to Bazānush [Valerian] Shāpur said, ‘if you are an engineer, you will build me a bridge as continuous as a cable, such a one as will remain everlastingly in position as a pattern to the wise when we have turned to dust. . . . In this land and region apply all the science of the philosophers of Rum, and when the bridge is completed, you may depart to your home or else remain as my guest for as long as you live.” ŠN, trans. Levy, 284. Also reflected in Mas’ūdī, *Murūj*, 1: 227; Ta’ālebī, *Gorar*, 494 and 527; D. Huff, “Bridges i: Pre-Islamic Bridges,” *Elr*.

20. On the intended audience for the Greek version of the ŠKZ, see Rubin, "Roman Empire in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*," 177 and 183–84. In contrast to Ardašīr I's reliefs in the Tang-e Āb on the road to his city of Ardašīr-Xwarrah, which were accessible to the population in general (one even at the site of bridge), the majority of Šāpūr I's reliefs are in areas where their potential audience was restricted to Sasanian elite; G. Herrmann, "The Rock Reliefs of Sasanian Iran," in *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Parthian and Sasanian Period: Rejection and Revival*, c. 238 B.C.–A.D. 642, ed. J. Curtis (London: British Museum Press for the Trustees of the British Museum, 2000), 41.

21. Šāpūr I produced eight rock reliefs over the course of his reign, as well as appearing in many of his father's. According to the chronology used by G. Herrmann, they are Darabgird, Naqš-e Rajāb I, Naqš-e Rajāb IV, Bīšāpūr I, Naqš-e Rostam V, Bīšāpūr III, and Bīšāpūr II; see G. Herrmann, D. N. Mackenzie, and R. Howell, *The Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Naqsh-e Rostam: Naqsh-e Rostam 6, The Triumph of Shapur I*, IrDenk 2.13 I (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1989), 22–23. To these well-known reliefs must be added the site of Rag-e Bībī in Afghanistan, discovered in 2004; Frantz Grenet, "Découverte d'un relief sassanide dans le nord de l'Afghanistan," *CRAI* (January–March 2005): 115–33; Frantz Grenet et al., "The Sasanian Relief at Rag-i Bibi (Afghanistan)," in *After Alexander: Central Asia before Islam*, ed. J. Cribb and G. Herrmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 243–67. The walls of the cave flanking the original site of Šāpūr's 7-meter-tall statue in the cave in the Tāng-e Čowgān gorge appear to have been prepared for the carving of rock reliefs. Though never executed, it is likely that they would have had contents similar to his other later rock reliefs. On a smaller scale, yet no less important, the "Paris cameo" depicts Šāpūr's capture of Valerian mythologized as an equestrian duel. Similarly, an issue of double dinars puts imagery similar to the rock reliefs directly into the hands of the Sasanian elite; M. Alram, M. Blet-LeMarquand, and P. O. Skjærvø, "Shapur, King of Kings of Iranians and Non-Iranians," in *Des Indo-Grecs aus Sassanides: Données pour l'histoire et la géographie historique*, *Res Orientales* 17, ed. R. Gyselen (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 2007), 11–40. Important study of Sasanian rock reliefs as a primary mode of royal expression: A. Soudavar, "The Vocabulary and Syntax of Iconography in Sasanian Iran," *IrAnt* 44 (2009): 417–60.

22. A dearth of clear evidence and the concomitant lack of scholarly consensus on chronology present a challenge to the study of Sasanian rock reliefs, as well as many other aspects of Sasanian art history. Formal clues help in broad measure to assign the reliefs to a specific reign and have been used to establish a chronology within reigns. The leading indicator is of course the king's individual crown, which one can match to his coinage. However, this does not always offer a firmly incontestable identification, as the controversies and confusions surrounding the reliefs of Dārābgird, Tāq-e Bostān I, and, to a lesser extent, the great *ayvān* at Tāq-e Bostān (III) demonstrate. Though valuable, inscriptions on the rock reliefs are rare. Since they could have been added later, more elaborate chronologies drawn from their contents can lead to distortions.

Differences and correspondences in sculptural techniques, style of dress, armaments and horse trappings on the figures, and sculptural style can often add supplementary information but tend to lead to distorted conclusions if relied on alone; see G. Herrmann, *The Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, vol. 2, IrDenk 2.10 F, pt. 2 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1981). The final indicator comes from the event depicted. The presence and number of Roman emperors in Šāpūr's reliefs offer clues to whether the relief was created before or after 240 or 260. However, this method of dating is not foolproof, as the relief at Dārābgird shows: the crown depicted matches Šāpūr's earliest crowns, and the techniques and formal clues point to an early date; yet the relief depicts what appear to be three Roman emperors, who are roughly similar to those included in Šāpūr's latest reliefs. As a result, scholars who favor formal elements have had to construct an event to which the scene in the relief at Dārābgird corresponds. Those who support the identification of the event have had to defend theories explaining formal discrepancies such as a recarving, or differences in workshop; L. Trümpelmann, *Das sasanidische Felsrelief von Darab*, IrDenk 6.2 B (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1979), 16–17; M. Meyer, "Die Felsbilder Shapurs I," *JDAI* 105 (1990): 237–302 (with extreme caution). The same applies to arguments drawn solely from inscriptions. Since scientific truth is as much a function of scholarly consensus as tangible evidence, and neither is likely to be forthcoming in regard to the most problematic Sasanian rock reliefs (Dārābgird and Ṭāq-e Bostān I), it seems wisest to accept a broader interpretation rather than waste time and risk distortions in order to come up with more specific chronologies. Herrmann, Mackenzie, and Howell, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs*, 22.

23. Several early handbooks and surveys have commented cursorily on the Roman elements in Šāpūr I's reliefs, and a handful of later articles have studied them in more detail: E. Herzfeld, *Archaeological History of Iran* (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1935), 84; id., *Iran in the Ancient Near East: Archaeological Studies Presented in the Lowell Lectures at Boston* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 318; G. Rodenwaldt, "The Transition to Late-Classical Art," *CAH* 12: 559; K. Erdmann, "Sasanidische Felsreliefs-römische Historienreliefs," *AntAb* 3 (1948): 77; R. Ghirshman, *Iran from the Earliest Times to the Islamic Conquest* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1954), 329; id., *Fouilles de Châpour: Bichâpour* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1971), 1: 168, 176–77; id., *Persian Art: The Parthian and Sasanian Dynasties*, 249 B.C.–A.D. 651, trans. S. Gilbert and J. Emmons (New York: Golden Press 1962), 158, 285; E. Porada, *The Art of Ancient Iran* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1965), 197–206; also R. Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art*, *Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 14 (New Haven: The Academy, 1963), 194; H. Luschey, "Iran und der Westen von Kyros bis Khosrow," *AMI* n.s. 1 (1968): 34; G. Herrmann, "The Darabgird Relief—Ardashir or Shapur?" *Iran* 7 (1969): 80–81; M. Mackintosh, "Roman Influences on the Victory Reliefs of Shapur I of Persia," *CSCA* 6 (1973): 181–203; G. Herrmann, *The Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, vol. 1, *Bishapur III, Triumph Attributed to Shapur I*, IrDenk 2.9 E, pt. 1 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1980), 32; H. von Gall,

"The Figural Capitals at Taq-e Bostan and the Question of the So-Called Investiture in Parthian and Sasanian Art," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 1 (1990): 103; G. Herrmann, "Shapur in the East: Reflections from His Victory Reliefs," in *The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Persia: New Light on the Parthian and Sasanian Empires*, ed. V. S. Curtis, R. Hillenbrand, and J. M. Rogers (London and New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), 45.

24. L. Vanden Berghe, *Reliefs rupestres de l'Iran ancien* (Brussels: Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, 1983), 118–20.

25. Grenet, "Découverte d'un relief sassanide," 116; Grenet et al., "The Sasanian Relief at Rag-i Bibi (Afghanistan)."

26. The remaining five reliefs, all of which depict a victory over the Romans, are Bīšāpūr I, Naqš-Rostam VI, Bīšāpūr III, Bīšāpūr II, and Dārābgird. There is no consensus on where Dārābgird fits into the chronology; however, most scholars accept that it depicts Šāpūr I and captive Romans, does so in a sculptural style that is unlike that of any of the other reliefs that depict Romans, and contains many, though not all, elements included in reliefs from the beginning of Šāpūr I's reign, such as the king's crown, clothing, and horse caparisons. Apart from this, there is little agreement. Scholars have attempted to resolve this conundrum by (1) identifying a Roman victory to justify an attribution to Ardašīr I, whose crown it also matches; (2) arguing that it is the first that he commissioned, following Gordian III's death and Philip's negotiation, yet before he assumed his distinctive regnal crown, thus leaving open the identities of the Romans, to account for an early date in Šāpūr I's reign; (3) assigning it to late in his reign and arguing that it was done by an entirely different workshop, which employed an older style and iconography; or (4) claiming that it was recarved at a later date, after Šāpūr I's victory over Valerian. In this relief, as in all his reliefs, Šāpūr is depicted on horseback, and lying under the king of kings' horse appears the prone body of a dead Roman emperor. Šāpūr I stretches out his left arm to grasp the head of another Roman, while behind him Ērānšāhr's leading dignitaries and before him members of a defeated Roman army observe. For the purposes of this project this relief is a valid piece of evidence insofar as it shows an interest in integrating Romans into the king's concerns, but it cannot be compared to the other reliefs, since it does not fit into a chronological series without potential distortion.

27. The most cogent argument for the identification of the Roman emperors remains that put forth by C. Macdermot in 1954; Macdermot correlated the three figures with Šāpūr I's description of his interaction with the Roman emperors in the ŠKZ. Thus the prone figure under Šāpūr I's horse (not present in Naqš-e Rostam) corresponds to Gordian III, who "was killed" (*ōzad*, ŠKZ 7); the figure who genuflects in front of the king of kings' horse corresponds to Philip the Arab, who, Šāpūr claims, "came to us as a suppliant and gave us 500,000 *dēnārs* as ransom [for the army's] lives, and became a tributary to us" (ŠKZ 8); and the figure whose wrists Šāpūr holds corresponds to Valerian, whom "we made prisoner with our own hands" (*xwad pad xwēbaš dast dastgraw kerd*, ŠKZ 22); B. C. Macdermot, "Roman Emperors in the Sassanian Reliefs," *JRS* 44

(1954): 76–80; Herrmann, Mackenzie, and Howell, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs*, 20–29. See also B. Overlaet, “A Roman Emperor at Bishapur and Darabgird: Ura-nius Antoninus and the Black Stone of Emesa,” *IrAnt* 44 (2009): 461–530.

28. The ideas and images in his reliefs show some development over the years. Bišāpūr I reflects Šāpūr I’s initial victory over Gordian III’s army and Philip the Arab’s payment of “tribute.” After Šāpūr’s capture of Valerian there was another burst of patronage that (leaving aside Dārābgird) involved at least three reliefs: Naqš-e Rostam VI, Bišāpūr III, Bišāpūr II. This second group of reliefs integrated Šāpūr’s victory and capture of Valerian with the ideas first set forth in Bišāpūr I.

29. For bibliography on the *barsom* and the gesture of respect, see M. Canepa, “The Two Eyes of the Earth: Competition and Exchange in the Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004), 56.

30. L. Vanden Berghe, *Reliefs rupestres de l’Iran ancien* (Brussels: Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire, 1983), 128, and the chart of Sasanian relief emblems on p. 99.

31. Excellent overview of the primary sources and literature: J. Duchesne-Guillemin, “Ahriman,” *Elr* (1982) 1: 670–73. Discussion of related Pahlavi texts: M. Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l’Iran ancien: Le problème zoroastrien et la tradition mazdéenne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 14–25.

32. S. Shaked, “The Notions *mēnōg* and *gētīg* in the Pahlavi Texts and Their Relation to Eschatology,” *Acta Orientalia* 33 (1971): 59–71; M. Boyce, “On the Antiquity of the Zoroastrian Apocalyptic,” *BSOAS* 47.1 (1984): 57–75; id., “Apocalyptic i: In Zoroastrianism,” *Elr*; J. Kellens, “L’eschatologie mazdéenne ancienne,” in *Irano-Judaica III*, ed. S. Shaked and A. Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1994), 49–53; S. Lambdon, “Eschatology i: In Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian Influence,” *Elr*. This powerful visual and ideological statement inspired several later kings of kings and was even used to express their response to the Roman threat.

33. G. Herrmann, *The Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, vol. 3, *Bishapur I, The Investiture/Triumph of Shapur I and Sarab-I Bahram, Bahram II Enthroned; The Rock Relief at Tang-I Qandil*, *IrDenk* 2.11 G, pt. 3 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983), 8–10 with earlier references; Vanden Berghe, *Reliefs rupestres*, 72–73.

34. Narseh (293–302) continued this tactic in his Paikuli inscription: NPī A8.02–A15.02; also NPī E5–8.06–cl-2.03 for the punishment of the *drōžān*. Like many other features of the Sasanian inscriptions, this particular idea has a linguistic and thematic precursor in Darius’s Old Pers. inscriptions, where “the Lie (*drauga*) grew in the countries” and the usurper Gaumata “lied to the people (*adurujiya*)”; DBī 31–38; M. Shayegan, “Aspects of Early Sasanian History and Historiography” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1999), 80–83.

35. Despite the possibility that the convention of the sovereign on horseback trampling a defeated enemy might have originated in Roman iconogra-

phy, Šāpūr I deftly and unquestionably appropriated it to convey solidly Iranian and specifically Persian concepts of divine kingship.

36. OIr. **daiva*-, Av. *dāēuua*-, Old Pers. *daiva*-, Mid. Pers. *dēw*; originally a category of deities in the Gathas, yet demonic in the Avesta, Old Persian inscriptions, and Middle Iranian inscriptions, as well as the Pahlavi books, in which they are the personification of every sort of evil that afflicts mankind and the world and are diametrically opposed to Ahura Mazdā and his creations. The older, celestial gods in Indo-Aryan religion, the *ahuric* gods (**asuras*) were elevated in Zoroastrianism to be the true, good gods, with the *daivic* beings as their diametrical, evil, and sometimes symmetrical opposites; C. Herrenschildt and J. Kellens, "Daiva," *Elr* (1993) 6: 599–602; A. Williams, "Dēw," *Elr* (1996) 7: 333–34; J. Kellens, *Le pantheon de l'Avesta ancien* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1994), 20–34 and 80–87. There is a whole class of *daivic* morphemes in Old and Middle Iranian that are used only for demonic creatures or actions, in contrast to the positive terms used for *ahuric* speech and actions; H. Güntert, *Über die ahurischen und daēvischen Ausdrücke im Awesta: Eine semasiologische Studie*, SBHeid 5.11 (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1914). The imperially symmetrical statement *dāēuuanqm dāēuuo*: Vd. 19.1, 43–44; Duchesne-Guillemin, "Ahriman."

37. ŠKZ 9.3; J. Kellens, "Druj-," *Elr*. In this regard notice the parallel between the role of the Iranian *xwarrah* in fighting the *drō* in the apocalyptic battle between good and evil and subsequent renovation of creation (*Dādistān ī dēnīg* 37.12–37; Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie*, 399–403) and Šāpūr I's battles with the Roman emperors who continually lied (*drūxt*).

38. In his relief at Naqš-e Rostam, which lacks the figure of Gordian III, Šāpūr I uses the image of Philip to represent his first Roman victory, suggesting that the image of the Roman emperor on bended knee before him was more powerful and useful than even the image of the slain emperor.

39. R. D. Barnett, "From Ivritz to Constantinople: A Study in Bird-Headed Swords," in *Festschrift für Kurt Bittel*, ed. R. M. Boehmer and H. Hauptmann, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde Kleinasien 12 (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1983), 59–74; Herrmann, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, 3: 9.

40. Bīšāpūr II likely follows Bīšāpūr III, the original formulation of this composition; Herrmann, Mackenzie, and Howell, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs*, 23.

41. W. Sundermann, "Zur Proskynesis in sāsānidischen Iran," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 10 (1964): 275–86; R. N. Frye, "Gestures of Deference to Royalty in Sasanian Iran," *IrAnt* 10 (1972): 102–7; J. K. Choksy, "Gesture in Ancient Iran and Central Asia II: Proskynesis and the Bent Forefinger," *BAI* 4 (1990): 201–7; id., "Gesture in Ancient Iran and Central Asia I: The Raised Hand," *ActIr* 30 (1990): 30–37. There is the additional problem of discerning the development of gestures of respect and submission in Sasanian Iran, which roughly parallels the problem of understanding the development of *proskynēsis* in Rome, except with fewer sources available. As expected, there is a noticeable difference between the late Sasanian and Islamic era sources and the information available in the rock reliefs, indicating that the practice changed over the course of time. A decent amount of information available for the be-

ginning and the end of the dynasty, but not much that sheds light on the practice's evolution.

42. Scholars focusing on the Roman empire have often ignored the Sasanian evidence in favor of classical sources such as Herodotus or Strabo, who refer to the Achaemenids. A good overview of the classical sources in their own context: J. Wiesehöfer, "'Denn ihr Huldig nicht einem Menschen als Eurem Herrscher, sondern den Göttern': Bemerkungen zur Proskynese in Iran," in *Religious Themes and Texts of Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia*, ed. C. G. Cereti, M. Maggi, and E. Provasi (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2003), 447–52.

43. Erdmann, "Sasanidische Felsreliefs-römische Historienreliefs," 77; Lusche, "Iran und der Westen," 34; Mackintosh, "Roman Influences on the Victory Reliefs," 181–203.

44. Erdmann and Lusche draw attention to the general similarities in triumphal iconography, with Erdmann paying special attention to Septimius Severus's monuments in Lepcis Magna; Erdmann, "Sasanidische Felsreliefs-römische Historienreliefs," 77; Lusche, "Iran und der Westen," 34; Ghirshman, *Bîchâpour*, 2: 168–69; also Gall, "Figural Capitals at Taq-e Bostan," 103. In a footnote, Mackintosh suggested that the overall composition of Bišāpūr III did not derive from Roman material but rather depended on Achaemenid material; Mackintosh, "Roman Influences on the Victory Reliefs," 186 n. 18. More recently, Herrmann argued more forcefully that Achaemenid sculpture from Persepolis provided a more accessible potential prototype for the artisans and closer formal parallels for the arrangement of the figures; Herrmann, "Shapur in the East," 42–46.

45. Mackintosh compared individual scenes in Roman and Sasanian relief sculpture formally, concentrating especially on individual scenes on Trajan's column and Marcus Aurelius's relief panels, yet largely divorced from context. Most of the scenes she chose for comparison were scenes of *clementia* and submission in which the emperor spares the lives of captured German or Dacian barbarians and receives their submission. She concluded that the figure of the kneeling Roman in the Sasanian reliefs had the same meaning as the kneeling barbarians in the particular reliefs she chose for formal comparisons, namely, the request and bestowal of *clementia*; Mackintosh, "Roman Influences on the Victory Reliefs," 181–203.

46. ŠKZ 8.

47. Rubin, "Roman Empire in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*," 178–79, 180–81.

48. ŠKZ 22; Macdermot, "Roman Emperors in the Sassanian Reliefs," 76–80; Herrmann, Mackenzie, and Howell, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs*, 20–29.

49. Sundermann, "Zur Proskynesis in sāsānidischen Iran," 284; Frye, "Gestures of Deference to Royalty," 107.

50. Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 5 especially; others collected in M. Dodgeon and S. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 58–65.

51. Alam, LeMarquand, and Skjærvø, "Shapur, King of Kings."

52. Older literature collected in H. von Gall, *Das Reiterkampfbild in der iranischen und iranisch beeinflussten Kunst parthischer und sasanidischer Zeit*, Teheraner Forschungen 6 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1990), 56; to this can be added Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 81–82, and R. Gyselen's short catalogue entry in *Perses sassanides*, 203. Von Gall argues that the gem depicts a contest between Jovian and Šāpūr II, on the grounds that (1) the gem contains three-quarter views of the faces, a formal convention unprecedented in Sasanian silver and Sasanian rock reliefs until Ṭāq-e Bostān I, a relief attributed by some scholars to Ardašīr II's reign (379–383) and others to Šāpūr II, and Ṭāq-e Bostān II, a relief depicting Šāpūr II and Šāpūr III, and (2) its crownless *korymbos* appears similar to the headgear of a silver bust in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which P. O. Harper suggests could date to the time of Šāpūr II. Such an argument based on Sasanian formal conventions does not agree with the internal evidence, which indicates Roman craftsmanship (Gall, *Das Reiterkampfbild*, 57 and 59); the gem's depiction of the king in armor, not his formal state crown; and the simple historical fact that Šāpūr II did not capture Jovian. Rather, the evidence weighs heavily on the side of Šāpūr I, inasmuch as he reminds us that he "took Valerian with my own hands," and deployed the same gesture of grabbing the emperor's wrist in all his depictions of Valerian.

53. Gall, *Das Reiterkampfbild*, 56.

54. A wide variety of evidence clearly indicates that the Sasanian kings wore different headgear (not to mention clothing) when in court and when on campaign; Sasanian artisans could depict their patron in either dress depending on the relief's subject matter. One can compare and contrast Šāpūr's headgear and raiment in the gem and his other reliefs to the same elements in Ardašīr I's victory relief at Fīrūzābād, his investiture scene in the Tang-e Āb canyon near Fīrūzābād, and all later reliefs. The difference between military and court headgear is clear; e.g., Amm. Marc. 19.1.3.

55. For the *paludamentum*, see below, chapter 9.

56. For the chest harness, see E. H. Peck, "Clothing iv: In the Sasanian Period," *Elr* (print ed., p. 749). Scholarship almost unanimously accepts such features on the Sasanian kings' crowns as symbolizing an aspect of the *xwarrah*; for an alternative view, however, see A. Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship*, Biblioteca Iranica Intellectual Traditions Series 10 (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers Inc., 2003), a scholar whose challenging work I respect and whose readings of the evidence I have debated in person several times.

57. K. Masia, "The Evolution of Swords and Daggers in the Sasanian Empire," *IrAnt* 35 (2000): 185–289, esp. 194–201.

58. This incredibly important object reportedly emerged from a hoard in Lahore, Pakistan, but has unfortunately fallen victim to the art market and disappeared; Alram, Blet-LeMarquand, and Skjærvø, "Shapur, King of Kings," 11–40.

59. Both of these reliefs are divided into multiple registers. Created first, Bīšāpūr III is on a smaller scale yet contains more figures—202 to be exact—

arranged in a roughly square composition set above the viewer on a curved rock face. It measures 6.7 by 9.22 meters and is divided into three vertical sections. The left and right sections portray the Sasanian nobles as horsemen (Phl. *aswārān*) and foreign delegates offering their submission, respectively, and are each divided into five horizontal registers, while the central section, which depicts the king of kings, the Roman emperors, and the most important Iranian dignitaries, contains only one central register. Bīšāpūr II measures roughly 4.5 by 12.5 meters. It stretches in a long rectangle close to the ground under a rock overhang and has three vertical sections divided, like Bīšāpūr III, between Sasanian knights, the king of kings and his “subject” kings, and foreign delegates, with the left and right divided into two horizontal registers, and the right subdivided into six subsections. Bīšāpūr II was never finished, and the upper right panel was never begun; however, the unfinished places retain evidence of plaster, suggesting that the panel was hastily patched up; Herrmann, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, 1: 9–30; id., *Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, 3: 11–21.

60. The exact identity of these two figures is unknown, but clues in their clothing suggest they are Iranian; Herrmann, Mackenzie, and Howell, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs*, 33.

61. Sundermann, “Zur Proskynesis in sāsānidischen Iran,” 284; Frye, “Gestures of Deference to Royalty,” 107.

62. Based on his headgear (including a diadem of intermediate length), his dress, and his placement, he is the most important Iranian; Herrmann, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, 1: 39. His animal-shaped headgear and lack of a beard make him comparable to the third figure to the right of Bahram II in Naqš-e Rostam, relief 2 (Herrmann, 1: 37), and a figure with similar headgear who appears in several of his obverse coin types. This link with Sasanian regalia could be a mark of his integration into the court hierarchy.

63. Herrmann, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, 1: 39.

64. G. Gropp, “Beobachtungen in Persepolis,” *AMI* 4 (1971): 46–48; Herrmann, *Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, 1: 32; id., “Shapur in the East,” 40–46; H. von Gall, “The Representation of Foreign People on the Rock Relief Bīšāpūr II: An Iconographical and Historical Problem,” in *The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Persia: New Light on the Parthian and Sasanian Empires*, ed. V. S. Curtis, R. Hillenbrand, and J. M. Rogers (London and New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), 51.

65. Since this general type of Iranian dress was popular all over the Sasanian empire, as well as in many regions outside it, it is difficult to propose exact identifications for all figures. H. von Gall proposes that the first group on the bottom could be Arabs, because of the similarity of their headgear to that of figures depicted in one of Bahrām II’s reliefs (Bīšāpūr IV) who most scholars agree represent Arabs; von Gall’s identification of the other figures, based on details such as belts or the order in which the ŠKZ names particular lands, would be more convincing if further evidence were provided; Gall, “Foreign People on the Rock Relief Bīšāpūr II,” 52–57; Herrmann, “Shapur in the East,” 47–48.

66. The figure with the animal-headed hat and the “tribute bearers” in the

upper three registers of Bīšāpūr III appear to be from the lands that made up the most prominent of Šāpūr I's Eastern conquests, Kušānšahr. Šāpūr I lists Kušānšahr as part of the "lands, rulers and governors [who have] all become tributary to us" (ŠKZ 3); most importantly, their dress closely matches the dress of figures on Gandharan sculpture; Herrmann, "Shapur in the East," 40–41.

67. If one accepts that it dates to Šāpūr I, the Dārābgird similarly depicts a captive Roman army and imperial carriage. This detail provides yet another piece of evidence linking the relief to Šāpūr I. The prospect that this relief and Bīšāpūr III portrayed a carriage that carried a captured Syrian *betyl*, and Bīšāpūr III, the *betyl* itself is intriguing: Overlaet, "A Roman Emperor at Bisapur and Darabgird."

68. The universalism of early Manichaeism (which emerged under Šāpūr I's reign) seems to echo these Sasanian claims to dominion over multiple empires, and the *Kephalaia* alludes to "the four kingdoms of the world"; M. Tardieu, "La diffusion du bouddhisme dans l'empire kouchan, l'Iran et la Chine, d'après un kephalaion manichéen inédit," *StudIr* 17.2 (1988): 153–80.

69. One must leave open the option that Bīšāpūr I could also have carried this figure, since the corresponding surface is totally abraded.

70. J. J. Pollitt's handbook provides a useful overview of the background of this phenomenon in the Hellenistic world and Rome: *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chap. 6, "Rococo, realism, and the exotic."

71. Ghirshman, *Bīchâpour*, 2: 171.

72. Roman triumphal art is rife with winged Victories and putti who bestow crowns on victorious rulers, bear trophies, inscribe shields, or lead captives—not to mention corresponding angelic figures in Christian art, who also bestow crowns or support triumphal insignia (crosses). Though not as numerous, Sasanian silver plates depicting banqueting or enthronement scenes commonly include a similar winged figure bestowing a diadem on the main figure.

73. Ghirshman, *Bīchâpour*, 1: 96; J. Balty, "Mosaïques romaines, mosaïques sassanides: Jeux d'influences réciproques," in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, ed. J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 29–44; id., *Mosaïques antiques du Proche-Orient* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995), 148–52.

74. Ghirshman, *Bīchâpour*, vol. 1, Rooms C and D, plan II. The mosaics were not the original floor of the "triple *ayvān* with mosaics" (D) but of a building that was destroyed in later remodeling. Ghirshman's plans and nomenclature can be misleading, but his description is quite clear; Ghirshman, *Bīchâpour*, 1: 21–25. The floor mosaic was deliberately covered over in the late Sasanian period and partially damaged when a sixth- or seventh-century wall was cut into it to create a colonnaded court with architectural and ornamental features similar to Takt-e Solayman and Ctesiphon; Keall, "Bīšāpūr," 288.

75. Ghirshman, *Bīchâpour*, 1: pl. 18, nos. 1 and 2; pl. 19, nos. 1–4.

76. J. Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor*, Baghdader Forschungen 5 (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1982), 195, fig. 90.3. Azarnoush questions Ghirshman's orig-

inal interpretation of this space as the throne room and suggests that it was a “‘fire-chapel’ within Šāpūr I’s palatial complex”; M. Azarnoush, *The Sasanian Manor House at Hājīābād, Iran*, Monografie di Mesopotamia 3 (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1994), 84–86. Whatever the exact function, the great size and impressively complex ornamentation of the space indicate that it was a significant royal statement.

77. R. Ghirshman, “Inscription du monument de Châpour Ier à Châpour,” *RAA* 10 (1936): 123–29.

78. H. von Gall, “Die Mosaiken von Bishapur,” *AMI* 4 (1971): 193–203.

79. For an overview of the artistic legacy of Hellenism in these regions, see J. Boardman, *The Diffusion of Classical Art in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 75–153; Dionysian motifs: R. Ettinghausen, *From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran and the Islamic World: Three Modes of Artistic Influence* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 3–10. Later Sasanian stuccowork incorporates this imagery and participates in this phenomenon as well, applying it, however, in a more eclectic way; Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor*.

80. A. Daems, “The Iconography of Pre-Islamic Women in Iran,” *StudIr* 36 (2001): 51–60.

81. Explored in chapter 10.

82. Ghirshman, *Bīchâpour*, 1: pls. 21–22; Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor*, 195–96. As well as evoking Achaemenid visual culture, the bull-headed capitals participated in a developing tradition of incorporating such figures near the sanctuary of Sasanian fire temples; Azarnoush, *Sasanian Manor House*, 146–50.

83. After Šāpūr I, the prodigious tide of victory that Sasanians had enjoyed since the foundation of the dynasty began to turn in favor of the Romans. The contents of Bahrām II’s rock reliefs suggest that he was concerned mostly with internal affairs and courting the allegiance of his courtiers and the Zoroastrian clergy. For the next century most of the reliefs of his successors reflected these same concerns. Bahrām II’s double equestrian victory at Naqš-e Rostam (relief VII) might be a possible exception. A rough figure can be made out under the hooves of Bahrām II’s horse in the upper relief, and some posit that it is Carus; E. Winter, “Legitimität als Herrschaftsprinzip: Kaiser und ‘König der Könige’ im wechselseitigen Verkehr,” in *Migratio et Commutatio*, ed. H. J. Drexhage and J. Sünskes (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1989), 133 n. 3.

5. ROME’S TROUBLED THIRD CENTURY AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW EQUILIBRIUM

1. Coin: *RIC* 4.3: 76, no. 69.

2. Sources collected and translated in M. Dodgeon and S. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 57–65. Capture: Zos. 1.36.1–2; Peter the Patrician in *FHG* 4: 187 n. 9; ŠKZ 22.2. See Huyse’s commentary on Šāpūr I’s Ka’ba-ye Zardošt inscription for the literature on the disagreements among the sources for this event: P. Huyse, ed. and trans., *Die dreispachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I. an der Ka’ba-i Zardušt* (ŠKZ),

Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum 3.1 (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1999), 2: 82–84. See also A. Luther, “Roms mesopotamische Provinzen nach der Gefangennahme Valerians (260),” in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, ed. J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 203–19.

3. M. Silvestrini, “Il potere imperiale da Severo Alessandro ad Aureliano,” in *Storia di Roma*, vol. 3.1, ed. A. Carandini, L. Cracco Ruggini, and A. Giardina (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1993), 168.

4. J. Gagé, “La théologie de la victoire impériale,” in *Revue Historique* 171 (1933): 1–43; M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 11–14.

5. Such as that of Postumus and the so-called Gallic empire. See D. Willers, “Gallienus,” *RE* 8 (2000): 770–71; L. De Blois, *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, Studies of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 1–8; A. Alföldi, “The Crisis of the Empire,” *CAH* 12 (1939): 182–90; H. B. Mattingly, “The Imperial Recovery,” *CAH* 12 (1939): 306–7; E. Manni, *L'impero di Gallieno: Contributo alla storia del III secolo* (Rome: Angelo Sig-norelli, 1949), 42–54.

6. DeBlois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 8.

7. *Ibid.*, 1.

8. Alföldi first showed how the *Historia Augusta's* account of Gallienus systematically warps the facts of his reign to present a slanderous caricature of the emperor: A. Alföldi, “Der Usurpator Aureolus und die Kavalleriereform des Gallienus,” *ZN* 37 (1927): 197–212; this article commented on and provided the historiographical context of *Historia Augusta* for F. Kolb's study “Andreas Alföldi und die Historia-Augusta-Forschung,” *HA* 6 (1998): 215–16.

9. Alföldi, “Crisis of the Empire,” 182–83.

10. *A damnatio* in practice but not in law: in the coins minted in Egypt, Gallienus's name had been accompanied by *Valerianus*, a practice that stops abruptly at this time. The same measure was applied to his sons as well. Alföldi even suggested that Gallienus demanded a new count of his regnal years from the time of sole rule and refused to list the victories that he had won during their time of co-regency; A. Alföldi, “Die Vorherrschaft der Pannonier im Römerreiche und die Reaktion des Hellenentums unter Gallienus,” in *Fünfund-zwanzig Jahre Römisch-Germanische Kommission*, ed. Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Archäologischen Instituts des Deutschen Reiches (Berlin and Leipzig: W. de Gruyter, 1930), 11–51; *id.*, “Crisis of the Empire,” 182–83; yet it remains generally accepted that he held his decennial celebrations in 262, thus counting his regnal years from 253; De Blois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 120.

11. While Valerian supported the senatorial class from which he came and which supported him, even to the detriment of the empire, Gallienus removed senators from military command and ended their monopoly on provincial governorships, thus cutting off any real connections to power. Although Gallienus

did this to enable those who were the most capable and talented to meet the crises presented by the most imperiled provinces, it appears he also had a secondary aim of separating the wealthiest men in the empire from military command in order to head off potential usurpations. As a result he accelerated both the militarization and the social mobility of the empire, a development that Diocletian would bring to fruition. Needless to say, this earned Gallienus the undying hatred of the senate, and such was their enmity that after his death most of his former advisors and friends were either killed off or forced to flee, and his memory was smeared by the senatorial historiographers. His life in the SHA rivals Elagabalus's and contains many of the same tropes: Kolb, "Andreas Alföldi," 215–16; A. Alföldi, "Das Problem des 'verweiblichten' Kaisers Gallienus," ZN 38 (1928): 156–203; Manni, *L'impero di Gallieno*, 82–83; DeBlois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 57–87.

12. In Rome in 259, at the beginning of his sole rule, he issued a reverse coin type common during the Republic that carried an image of Janus with a *patera* and scepter, while in 260 he struck coins depicting Mars descending on Rhea Silva and others that bear the she-wolf with Romulus and Remus and the legend *AETERNITATI[s] AUG[usti]*; Rhea Silva: RIC 5.1: 161, no. 254; she-wolf: RIC 5.1: 161, no. 349; 186, no. 628; 190, no. 677; there are other coins struck to *Vesta Felix*: RIC 5.1: no. 290.

13. De Blois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 124–25.

14. Ibid, 129–35.

15. Coins: RIC 5.1, 131, no. 9; 133, no. 28; A. Alföldi, "Augustus als Vorbild des Gallienus," ZN 38 (1928), reprinted in *Studien zur Geschichte der Weltkrise des 3. Jahrhunderts nach Christus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 52–54.

16. J. D. Breckenridge, *Likeness: A Conceptual History of Portraiture* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 214.

17. In the coinage of both Gallienus and his son, the emperor receives the globe from Juppiter, symbolizing the right to rule, with the emperor and god standing as equals and appearing as the same height; J. R. Fears, *Princeps a Diis Electus: The Divine Election of the Emperor as a Political Concept at Rome* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1977), 307.

18. For example (according to Alföldi), Gallienus supposedly deployed Sol Invictus to win over his defecting or wavering Syrian troops, while Liber Pater and Sol Invictus could appeal specifically to the Illyrian and Pannonian armies. While Juppiter, Neptune, Mars, and Hercules spoke more generally to the military, the references to Mercury and Apollo supposedly reflected Gallienus's philhellenism, although, as favorites of Augustus, they could also promote Gallienus's program to be a second Augustus; Alföldi, "Augustus als Vorbild des Gallienus," 52–54.

19. Valid for whichever fall—476, 602, 1204, or 1453—one prefers.

20. A. Alföldi, "The Crisis of the Empire," CAH 12 (1939): 213–16; for discussion of the practice of royal theomorphic assimilation, esp. regarding Sol, see

M. Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher: Theomorphes Herrscherbild und politische Symbolik im Hellenismus und in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1998), 1–11.

21. RIC 5.2: 132, 139, no. 99; 144, no. 160; 161, no. 348. The most remarkable of all is an issue where Gallienus adopts the attributes, and even the gender, of Demeter/Kore. On these coins, Gallienus appears on the obverse with a crown of corn and the legend *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE*. Originally studied by Alföldi, “Augustus als Vorbild des Gallienus,” 31–52; for the debate on the meaning and whether Gallienus was initiated or not, see H. P. L’Orange, “Sol Invictus Imperator: Ein Beitrag zur Apotheose,” *SO* 14 (1935): 88; R. Delbreuck, *Die Münzbildnisse der römischen Kaiser von Maximinus bis Carinus* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1940), 48; G. Pugliese Carratelli, “La crisi dell’Impero nell’età di Gallieno,” *PP* 2 (1947): 62; J. M. C. Toynbee, “Ruler Apotheosis in Ancient Rome,” *NC* (1947): 147–49; M. Rosenbach, *Galliena Augusta: Allgot und Einzelgötter im gallienischen Pantheon*, *Aparchai: Untersuchungen zur Klassischen Philologie und Geschichte des Altertums* 3 (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1958), 28; F. Taeger, *Charisma: Studien zur Geschichte des antiken Herrscherkultes* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960), 2: 440–41; De Blois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 151–55; M. R. Alföldi, *Bild und Bildersprache der römischen Kaiser: Beispiele und Analysen*, *Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt* 81 (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1999), 219–24, with discussions of other coins that make allusions to the mysteries; also p. 57. Gallienus traveled to Athens and was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, and he alluded to this on his coinage. The SHA portrays this event in the life of Gallienus as another example of his *vanitas*: R. Turcan, “Les mystères d’Eleusis dans l’Histoire Auguste,” *HA* 6 (1996): 325–38.

22. Alföldi, “Augustus als Vorbild des Gallienus,” 52–54.

23. Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher*, 275; L’Orange, “Sol Invictus Imperator,” 93 n. 2; Rosenbach, *Galliena Augusta*, 46–52; Rosenbach attempts to link this renewed veneration directly to Plotinian Neoplatonism; his theory is not widely accepted: De Blois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 168–69; Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher*, 275.

24. Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher*, 275–76; it appears that the *Historia Augusta* (18.2) might have picked up on Gallienus’s special interest in Sol and uses it to cast him as a “second Nero,” who, as the stereotypical insane tyrant, orders a colossal bronze statue built twice the height of Nero’s representing him as Sol. In another passage (16.3), to accentuate Gallienus’s purported effeminacy and megalomania, the SHA uses such stock accusations as claiming he sprinkled his hair with gold dust and wore a radiate crown; Alföldi, “Augustus als Vorbild des Gallienus,” 16–31; C. Lega, “Colossus: Gallienni,” *LTUR* 1: 295.

25. B. Dignas and E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23.

26. E. W. Merten, *Zwei Herrscherfeste in der Historia Augusta: Untersuchungen zu den Pompae der Kaiser Gallienus und Aurelianus*, *Antiquitas* 4.5 (Bonn: R. Habelt Verlag, 1968), 94–99. Barnes argues that any appearance of

the Franci is just a retrojection from a late fourth-century mentality and should be approached with caution; T. D. Barnes, "The Franci before Diocletian," *SH* 2 (1994): 11–18.

27. Merten, *Zwei Herrscherfeste in der Historia Augusta*, 99; De Blois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 116.

28. Merten, *Zwei Herrscherfeste in der Historia Augusta*, 99; De Blois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 135–36.

29. SHA Gal. 8.7.

30. Military propaganda: De Blois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 100–116.

31. Coins and titles: De Blois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 136 n. 56.

32. M. Schottky, "Zenobia," *RE* 12.2: 730–34; E. E. Schneider, *Septimia Zenobia Sebaste*, *Studia Archaeologica* 61 (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1993), 75–78.

33. Zos. 1.60–61; A. R. Birley, "Aurelianus," *NPRE* 2: 318. Zos. 1.55 reports Zenobia was captured fleeing to the Sasanians for help, and the SHA (*Aurel.* 28.1–4) reports the Romans also intercepted Sasanian troops sent to aid her; Schneider, *Septimia Zenobia Sebaste*, 84; Luther, "Roms mesopotamische Provinzen," 210–11.

34. *CIL* 3: 7586; 6: 1112; 8: 9040; 12: 5549, 5561; 13: 8973; E. Kettenhofen, "Zur Siegestitulatur Kaiser Aurelians," *Tyche* 1 (1986): 144; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 25.

35. *CIL* 5: 4319; Kettenhofen, "Zur Siegestitulatur Kaiser Aurelians," 144.

36. *CIL* 8: 12522; *IGRR* 1.1144; *RIC* 5.2: 140, nos. 48, 50; 138, no. 30; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 26.

37. Luther, "Roms mesopotamische Provinzen," 211–13.

38. Diocletian had to deal with consolidating his hold over the empire and Rome's northern frontier. Bahrām II's reign was bedeviled by the revolt of one his brothers in the east and by internal power struggles between the king of kings, the nobility, and the clergy. At this time Kerdīr rose to the zenith of his influence, and with it Christian, Manichaean, and Buddhist persecutions reached a peak; T. Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 12, 14, and 75–77; E. Winter, *Die sāsānidisch-römischen Friedensverträge des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der aussenpolitischen Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Grossmächten* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988), 137–45.

39. E. Winter and B. Dignas, *Rom und das Perserreich: Zwei Weltmächte zwischen Konfrontation und Koexistenz* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 47.

40. *Persicus Maximus*: *CIL* 3: 5810. Bahrām II's request for peace in official propaganda: *Pan. Lat.* 10.7.5, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 65; also 10.9.2.

41. R. C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1992), 5. We encountered Narseh's accession inscription and monument earlier where he treats the Roman emperor, Diocletian, as the first among his client kings; *NPi* 92, H16.02–H17.02; Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 70 and glossary, 106; Z. Rubin, "The Roman Empire in the *Res Gestae Divi Sapo*res—The Mediterranean World in Sasanian Prop-

aganda," in *Ancient Iran and the Mediterranean World*, ed. E. Dąbrowa (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 1998), 181–82.

42. NPi 92, H16.02–H17.02; Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 70 and glossary, 106.

43. Frye 1983, 307–8. This opposition on the part of the Sasanian court toward the Arsacid royal family contrasts with the large role Parthians played in the Sasanian empire and their influence on many aspects of Sasanian culture, from art to religion.

44. Luther, "Roms mesopotamische Provinzen," 213–17.

45. Although this might have been part of normal Tetrarchic court ritual, according to Ammianus (and several other sources) Diocletian made Galerius march in front of his carriage for nearly a mile clad in the purple as punishment for this defeat; Amm. Marc. 14.11.10; Festus *Breviarum* 25; Eutropius 9.24; Orosius *Adversus paganos* 7.25.9–11; Dodgeon and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*, 376 n. 41.

46. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 5–7. Sources collected in Dodgeon and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*, 125–31.

47. The beginnings of a language of cooperation can be detected in the negotiations that led to this treaty; Peter the Patrician, frag. 13. The treaty in detail: Winter, *Die sāsānidisch-römischen Friedensverträge*, 152–215; Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 5–7. On the role of official religious tolerance and persecution during this era of conflict, see J. Wiesehöfer, "Narseh, Diokletian, Manichäer und Christen," in *Inkulturation des Christentums im Sasanidenreich*, ed. A. Mustafa and J. Tubach (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2007), 161–69.

48. Constructed between 298 and 305.

49. B. Brenk, "Innovation im Residenzbau der Spätantike," in *Innovation in der Spätantike*, ed. B. Brenk, *Spätantike-Frühes Christentum-Byzanz: Kunst im Ersten Jahrtausend B.1* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1996), 68; F. Coarelli, "La situazione edilizia di Roma sotto Severo Alessandro," in *L'urbs: Espace urbain et histoire (Ier siècle av. J.C.–IIIe siècle ap. J.C.)*, Collection de l'École Française de Rome 98 (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1987), 429–30; the date: F. Kolb, *Diocletian und die Erste Tetrarchie: Improvisation oder Experiment in der Organisation monarchischer Herrschaft* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1987), 159–62.

50. The topic of imperial residences has generated a great deal of scholarship, a certain school of which unfortunately has limited itself to quibbling about modern definitions of "palatial systems," which seem to focus more on palatial Platonic ideals and less on the structures and what was done in them: N. Duval, "Comment reconnaître un palais impérial ou royal? Ravenne et Piazza Armerina," *FR* 115 (1978): 29–62; id., "Palais et cité dans la 'Pars Orientis,'" *CorsiRav* 25 (1978): 41–51; id., "Sirmium 'villa impériale' ou capitale," *CorsiRav* 26 (1979): 53–90, esp. 74; id., "Existe-t-il une 'structure palatiale' propre à l'antiquité tardive?" in *Le system palatial en Orient en Grèce et à Rome*, ed. E. Levy (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 463–90; id., "Les résidences impériales: Leur rapport avec les problèmes de légitimité, les partages de l'empire et la chronologie des combinaisons dynastiques," in *Usurpationen in der Spätantike*, ed. F. Pachoud

and J. Szidat, *Historia* 111 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1998): 127–53. Brenk observes: “N. Duval hat in zahlreichen Aufsätzen zum spätantiken Palastbau verschiedene Hypothesen und Deutung angezweifelt oder demontiert, ohne selbst neue Gesichtspunkte zur Diskussion zu stellen. Seine hyperkritische Haltung hat jeden Neuansatz abgewürgt. Die Kunstgeschichtsschreibung lebt aber notwendigerweise auch von Hypothesen und neuen Ideen, die, wenn sie selbstkritisch vortragen werden, das Verständnis der Monumente durchaus fördern können.” Merely negating all hypotheses regarding these structures brings us no closer to understanding them, and—as in the case of other third-century problems—in order to make sense of the material one must draw conclusions from the available evidence, even though it might not conform to preconceived expectations. Luckily a new strain of scholarship has begun asking more useful questions of the material: Brenk, “Innovation im Residenzbau,” 68; also G. Vespignani, *Il circo di Constantinopoli nuova Roma* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 2001), 84–86; especially E. Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist: Untersuchungen zu den Staatsdenkmälern des dezentralisierten Reiches von Diocletian bis zu Theodosius II*, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Forschungsinstitut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte Monographien 53 (Mainz: Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Press, 2002), 39–42. Galerius’s palace appears to have had two audience halls, one an octagonal structure facing the sea, possibly meant for receiving newly arrived visitors into the palace grounds, and one basilica-form structure in the interior whose ground plan and size perfectly match Constantius I’s *aula regia* at Trier; Mayer, 46, 34–38 (Trier).

51. With its pendant structures, it was actually an octapylon, though the main structure conformed to the form of a tetrapylon; Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, 47–50.

52. The south gate opened into a vestibule measuring approximately 43 meters by 18 meters and decorated with porphyry slabs, mosaics, and an inscription; from the vestibule one could turn toward the palace, directly south, or, by way of its *carceres*, into the hippodrome, which lay to the east, next to the walls; Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, 49–50 n. 190 and 55–57.

53. This analogy is made only in a general sense: Constantine used the Chalke Gate (*Chalkē Pylē*) to represent himself to the city and communicate his dynastic, religious, and military aspirations. Eusebius records the encaustic painting Constantine set over the gate, which depicted him enthroned with the Chi-Rho over his head, flanked by his sons, with a serpent under his feet, which was pierced by a dart and falling into the sea; Euseb. VC 3.3. Roughly two hundred years later, in his rebuilt Chalke, Justinian pursued a similar program in mosaic, in contrast to Galerius’s sculpture and Constantine’s encaustic, to promote himself and his consort and celebrate his victories; Procop. *Aed.* 1.10.10–20; C. Mango, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople*, Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, Archaeologisk-Kunsthistoriske Meddelelser 4.4 (Copenhagen: I Kommission hos Munksgaard, 1959), 22–24 and 30–34. On the role of Justinian’s Chalke in Roman-Sasanian interaction, see below, chapter 8.

54. Karl Frederik Kinch was the first to suggest that the monument celebrated Galerius's Persian campaign; K. F. Kinch, *L'arc triomphe de Salonique* (Paris: Librairie Nilsson, 1890), 12; Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, 57.

55. Attempts at its full interpretation: Kinch, *L'arc triomphe de Salonique*; H. von Schoenebeck, "Die zyklische Anordnung der Triumphalreliefs am Galeriusbogen in Saloniki," *BZ* 37 (1937): 361–71; H. P. Laubscher, *Die Relief-schmuck des Galeriusbogens in Thessaloniki*, Archäologische Forschungen 1 (Berlin: Mann, 1975); M. Pond-Rothman, "The Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs on the Arch of Galerius," *AJA* 81.4 (1977): 427–54; H. Meyer, "Die Frieszyklen des sogenannten Triumphalbogen des Galerius in Thessaloniki: Kriegschronik und Ankündigung der zweiten Tetrarchie," *JDAI* 95 (1980): 374–444; Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, 47–65; as well as several passing mentions in Roman art handbooks and studies.

56. I generally follow Laubscher's identifications, though with slight amendments from appropriate later literature. The top panel on the east face, originally in the interior of the tetrapylon, depicts the Roman cavalry emerging from a captured Sasanian city, marked by triangular crenellations. The panel underneath continues the narrative and portrays one of the chief events of the war: the capture of Narseh's wives and children by Roman soldiers, who sweep in from the left and right. Below, the Romans drive the Sasanians over the river Tigris, identified as such by an inscription, which, as a result of Galerius's campaign, became the boundary between the two realms. The top panel of the south face depicts a frontal cavalry assault led by Galerius that routs the Sasanians, referred to by Laubscher and Pond-Rothman as "the Last Battle." The panel underneath shows the deportation of the population of a Sasanian city (again, marked by triangular crenellations over the city gate), followed by the *adventus* of the emperor into a city, identified originally by its river deity, whose inscription is unfortunately now abraded. From a narrative perspective the story continues on the western panels, which show the Sasanian envoys entreating seated emperors on the top two panels of the north pier, followed by an highly abraded panel. The south pier continues this celebration of victory with Galerius receiving an elephant-drawn quadriga followed by an abraded scene referred to variously as *virtus Augusti* or as an unspecified skirmish. The story concludes on the east side of the south pier, notably skipping the south face of the south pier, the face that originally appeared before the palace gate. The east face begins with an address to the victorious cavalry, followed by the receipt of a Sasanian embassy, and concludes with Diocletian and Galerius sacrificing in the presence of deities or personifications. Since we have only half of the structure, it is prudent to leave open the possibility that the panels on this face fit in elsewhere in the narrative or could be interpreted as more symbolic scenes.

57. Expecting a narrative organization similar to that of earlier Roman triumphal arches and columns, some scholars have questioned the narrative intent of the reliefs altogether, calling it "bricolage" and characterizing several of the panels as "banal commentary." Others have attempted to impose a narrative structure on every single panel of Galerius's monument, even if it means

constructing elaborate methods of reading, such as shifting back and forth between the piers repeatedly. However, such explanations do not fully take into account the multiple ways that a spectator might encounter the structure, nor the possibility, as von Schoenebeck and Laubscher pointed out, that not all panels participate in the narrative structure; R. Brilliant, *Visual Narratives: Storytelling in Roman and Etruscan Art* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), 119; Meyer, “Die Frieszyklen des sogenannten Triumphalbogen,” 374–444. Von Schoenebeck was the first to suggest a modulation between panegyric and analistic portrayals, as well as to observe that the panels generally progress from top to bottom when they deal with narrative material; his observations are the foundation for the interpretations of Laubscher, Pond-Rothman, and Mayer, and thus for my own approach; Schoenebeck, “Die zyklische Anordnung der Triumphalreliefs,” 361–71; Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 104; Pond-Rothman, “Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs,” 427–54.

58. Pond-Rothman, “Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs,” 449; H. P. L’Orange, *Das spätantike Herrscherbild von Diokletian bis zu den Konstantin-Söhnen*, 284–361 n. Chr., *Das Römische Herrscherbild* 3.2 (Berlin: Mann, 1984), 3–6; F. Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, Studienbücher Geschichte und Kultur der Alten Welt (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 46–49.

59. With Emanuel Mayer, I believe this is the guiding principle for a coherent interpretation of the structure, as far as its damaged state will allow; Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, 63–65.

60. One might infer that the reliefs on the exterior of the destroyed eastern piers were specially picked as well to convey a similar effect.

61. The negotiations likely occurred through intermediaries; Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 38–41.

62. Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 39–41.

63. Although related to *clementia* scenes, like those on the Cancellaria reliefs or the Boscoreale cups, in which an emperor gives clemency to (usually German) captives (Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 40), scenes of an Iranian sovereign approaching alone have their own line of descent and belong in their own category. While the scenes might be formulaic here, the proceedings, not to mention the climax of events, had a political element; *contra* Pond-Rothman, “Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs,” 437.

64. Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 41.

65. Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 40.

66. *Ibid.*

67. Kolb, *Diocletian und die Erste Tetrarchie*, 115–27.

68. The scene of Sasanians performing *proskynēsis* occurs again later in the cycle, on the south pier’s eastern face, which originally flanked the entrance to the palace. This panel depicts three Sasanian envoys in the act of *proskynēsis*, interestingly combining the “Roman” and “Iranian” forms: they are kneeling but hold their right hands up to their faces in a manner similar to the gesture that Sasanian dignitaries often perform before the king of kings in many Sasanian rock reliefs; Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 51.

69. Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 42–43.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., 81; on *tzaggia*, see chapter 9.
72. The female figure possibly represented Roma or an imperial virtue; Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 81–82.
73. Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 82–83; Pond-Rothman, "Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs," 445.
74. Pond-Rothman, "Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs," 445–47.
75. M. Pond-Rothman, "The Panel of the Emperors Enthroned on the Arch of Galerius," *ByzSt* 2.1 (1975): 19–40; Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 69–78; Kolb, *Diocletian und die Erste Tetrarchie*, 156–76; W. Raeck, "Tu fortiter, ille sapienter: Augusti und Caesares im Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens von Thessalonike," in *Festschrift für N. Himmelmann*, ed. H.-U. Cain et al., Beihefte der Bonner Jahrbücher 47 (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1989), 453–57.
76. *Pan. Lat.* 8.4.1–4, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 68; also 10.10.1.
77. Laubscher and Pond-Rothman take care to indicate that the Caesars stand by their dynastic "fathers" but in a show of Tetrarchic *concordia* stand with the *Augustus* of the other half of the empire; Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 75–76; Pond-Rothman, "Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs," 444.
78. Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 66–69.
79. Ibid., 69 n. 331. Others have interpreted these figures differently from Laubscher. Some have argued that they depict other Tetrarchs; e.g., A. C. Levi, *Barbarians on Roman Imperial Coins and Sculpture*, Numismatic Notes and Monographs 123 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1952), 32. Others suggest that the figures served only a compositional (rather than a narrative) purpose; e.g., Pond-Rothman, "Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs," 443.
80. In addition to its appearance in Ardašir I's triumph over Ardawān at Firūzābād and Šāpūr I's cameo, the motif was well established in Parthian visual culture, in media ranging from royal rock reliefs to the frescoes of the synagogue at Dura Europos. After this period the Sasanian kings of kings portrayed the equestrian duel five more times in their rock reliefs: Naqš-e Rostam 3, 5, and 7 (a double relief) and Ray. The great *ayvān* at Ṭāq-e Bostān also alludes to the equestrian battle with its over-life-size horseman; H. von Gall, *Das Reiterkampfbild in der iranischen und iranisch beeinflussten Kunst parthischer und sasanidischer Zeit*, Teheraner Forschungen 6 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1990), 69.
81. Cf. the avian form of the *Airīianām xʷarənō* in Yt. 19.34–38 and visually with the wings on several of the Sasanian crowns; G. Gnoli, "Farr(ah)," *Elr* (1999) 9: 312–19; R. Göbl, *Sasanian Numismatics*, trans. P. Severan (Braunschweig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1971), table 3, beginning with Bahrām II, soon to become part of the standard late Sasanian crown. General background in Iranian royal visual culture: H. Harmatta, "Royal Power and Immortality: The Myth of the Two Eagles in Iranian Royal Ideology," *ActaAntHung* 27 (1979): 305–19.

82. Yt. 19 *passim*.

83. Kinch, *L'arc triomphe de Salonique*, 45; Pond-Rothman, "Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs," 431, 437, and 439. The northern face of the north pier portrays a file of four heavily burdened camels led toward the interior of the tetrapylon. This panel is at a different level than the victories and parade of gift-bearing Sasanians, and although the direction of the animals suggests it could augment the effect of the lower panels, its location in the upper three registers implies that it could have been part of the narrative as well, much like the deportation scene on the south face of the north pier.

84. Although filtered through the Roman convention of "the Parthian," the Iranian dress of these figures shows a familiarity with and attention to contemporary Sasanian clothing styles. The trousers are loose and do not taper at the ankle or fit tightly, as in some representations of Parthians. Similarly the figures' tunics appear to respond to the late third-/early fourth-century change in Sasanian fashion from a squared to a rounded front; V. S. Curtis, "Clothing iv: In the Sasanian Period," *EIr*.

85. The vessels they hold appear to correspond more closely to Roman shapes, though a few have broad parallels in the Sasanian world. The vessels and the "textile" are too abraded to provide any details other than their general shape.

86. Pond-Rothman, "Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs," 442.

87. H. Torp, "The Date of the Conversion of the Rotunda at Thessaloniki into a Church," in *The Norwegian Institute at Athens: The First Five Lectures* (Athens: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1991), 13–28.

88. H. Torp, "Victoria Persica: Un tema trionfale espresso in forma pagana e cristiana nel palazzo imperiale di Thessalonica," *Colloqui Sodalizio*, 2 ser., 6 (1980): 83–87, esp. 84; Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, 66.

89. Torp, "Victoria Persica," 82; Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, 66.

90. Dionysian motifs decorated the most important audience hall at Felix Romuliana and included an image of the god himself riding a leopard, with a nimbus and holding a thyrsus and *kantharos* like a scepter and orb in a very regal pose; A. Lalovic, in *Rimski carski gradovi i palate u Srbiji*, ed. D. Srejovi, Galerija Srpske Akademije Nauka i Umetnosti 73 (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of the Arts, 1993), 266–67. Stephanidou-Tiveriou sees the Dionysian imagery as referring exclusively to Dionysus in terms of his association with Thessaloniki. I don't think one can dismiss the corroboration of the Dionysian imagery at Gamzigrad as she does by referring to it as "unofficial" because it was in Galerius's villa. The visual and ornamental material from the villa contains many other elements of an "official" character, similar to other Tetrarchic productions, including images of the Tetrarchs themselves in their characteristic embrace, a porphyry sculpture of the emperor enthroned (similar to that of Diocletian from Egypt) on a jeweled throne and crowned by a winged Victory with a crown containing portraits of the senior *Augusti*. The distinction between Tetrarchic villa and palace is largely irrelevant when it comes to political symbolism. See T. Stephanidou-Tiveriou, *To mikro toxo tou Galeriu ste Thessalonike*, Bibliothekes tes

en Athenais Archaïologikhes Etaireias 151 (Athens: Hē en Athēnais Arkhaïologikē Hetaireia, 1995), 77 and 116, 115–17; Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, 66 and 80–91.

91. Galerius's association with Dionysus was probably relatively understated and did not reflect a central driving policy, as Nicholson has suggested; Torp, "Victoria Persica," 84; O. Nicholson, "The Wild Man of the Tetrarchy: A Divine Companion for the Emperor Galerius," *Byzantion* 54 (1984): 253–75.

92. F. Gnechi, *I medaglioni romani* (Milan: V. Hoepli, 1912), 2: 132; R. Garucci, "Brass Medallion Representing the Persian Victory of Maximianus Galerius," *NC* n.s. 10 (1870): 112–18; Schoenebeck, "Die zyklische Anordnung der Triumphalreliefs," 370; H. Dressel, *Die römischen Medallione des Münzkabinetts der staatlichen Museen zu Berlin* (Dublin and Zurich: Weidmann, 1973), 1: 306; Laubscher, *Die Reliefschmuck des Galeriusbogens*, 135; E. Chrysos, "Some Aspects of Roman-Persian Legal Relations," *Kleronomia* 8 (1976): 16–17; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 86.

93. Chrysos saw in the kneeling figure a recognition of the Sasanian king of kings' parity with the Roman emperor. As in the case of the "Paris cameo," the medallion's purpose was clearly to express dominance, especially after such a successful campaign. One must look in the language and outcome of diplomacy, as Chrysos did, for more solid evidence for the two realms' movement toward recognition of each other's right to exist and equal status; Chrysos, "Roman-Persian Legal Relations," 15–17.

6. CONTESTED IMAGES OF SACRAL KINGSHIP AND NEW EXPRESSIONS OF TRIUMPH

1. The phenomenon in the Roman empire is studied in depth by M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 35–79.

2. On the Tetrarchic *domus divina*, see F. Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, Studienbücher Geschichte und Kultur der Alten Welt (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 168–69.

3. *Numen*: *Pan. Lat.* 11. 2.3; *Cod. Theod.* 1.9.2, 2.23.1, et al.; A. Demandt, *Die Spätantike: Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian 284–565 n. Chr.*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 3.6 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1989), 221.

4. *Altaria*: *Nov. Val.* 21; *caeleste oraculum*: *Cod. Theod.* 7.3.2; *sacrilegium*: *Cod. Theod.* 1.6.9, 6.5.2; Demandt, *Die Spätantike*, 221.

5. "For imperial success must be judged neither by its outward appearance nor by its name. Your triumphal robes and consular fasces, your curule thrones, this glittering crowd of courtiers, *that light which surrounds your divine head with a shining orb*, these are the trapping of your merits, very fine indeed, and most majestic." *Pan. Lat.* 10.3.2., trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 57–58 (emphasis mine). The "Lyon lead medallion," depicting Diocletian and Maximian, is the first instance of the nimbus in official imperial iconography; M. R.-Alföldi, *Bild*

und Bildersprache der römischen Kaiser: Beispiele und Analysen, Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt 81 (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1999), 46. For the nimbus's specific role between the two realms, see below, chapter 9.

6. For an overview of debates on the Sasanian titulature, see M. Alram, M. Blet-LeMarquand, and P. O. Skjærvø, "Shapur, King of Kings of Iranians and Non-Iranians," In *Des Indo-Grecs aus Sassanides: Données pour l'histoire et la géographie historique*, Res Orientales 17, ed. R. Gyselen (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 2007), 30–37; P. Huyse, "Die sasanidische Königstitulatur: Eine Gegenüberstellung der Quellen," in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, Oriens et Occidens 13 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 182–86, 191–92. The word *čīhr* (from Old Iranian **čīθra*) should be translated as "form, essence"; the word shares this meaning with its counterparts in the majority of related Iranian languages. Although the phrase *kē čīhr [ctry] az yazdān* has sometimes been translated to reflect the less common meaning of *čīhr* "from the seed (semen) of the gods," the valence of this word in the majority of Sasanian official inscriptions coheres more strongly with "form, essence"; ŠKZ 1.6; see commentaries in ŠKZ 1: 11–12; ANRm-a; M. Back, *Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften: Studien zur Orthographie und Phonologie des Mittelpersischen der Inschriften, zusammen mit einem etymologischen Index des mittelpersischen Wortgutes und einem Textcorpus der behandelten Inschriften*, ActIr 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 281–82; A. Panaino, "Astral Characters of Kingship in the Sasanian and Byzantine Worlds," in *Persia e Bisanzio*, 559; see also id., "The Bagān of the Fratarakas: Gods or 'Divine' Kings," in *Religious Themes and Texts of Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia*, ed. C. Cereti, M. Maggi, and E. Provasi (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2003), 279–81. In relation to the later Islamic material: A. Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship*, Biblioteca Iranica Intellectual Traditions Series 10 (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 41–80. Coin legends: M. I. Mochiri, "Titulature de Šāpūr II," *Iran* 28 (1990): 13–22. The phrase disappears after the mid-fifth century; W. Sundermann, "*kē čīhr az yazdān*: Zur Titulatur der Sasanidenkönige," *Archív Orientalní* 56 (1988): 338–40; Huyse, "Die sasanidische Königstitulatur," 186.

7. A distinction, of course, should be made between the fixed stars, sun, and full moon, which were *ahuric*, and the wandering stars (the planets), which were *daēvic*, in Zoroastrian cosmology and set in opposition to Ohrmazd's good creations by Ahreman; *Bundahišn* 5; D. N. MacKenzie, "Zoroastrian Astrology in the *Bundahišn*," *BSOAS* 27.3 (1964): 511–29; W. B. Henning, "An Astronomical Chapter of the *Bundahishn*," *JRAS* (1942) 229–48.

8. Panaino, "Astral Characters of Kingship," 561–62.

9. A. Panaino, "Uranographia Iranica I: The Three Heavens in the Zoroastrian Tradition and the Mesopotamian Background," in *Au carrefour des religions: Mélanges offerts à Philippe Gignoux*, ed. R. Gyselen (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen Orient, 1995), 205–25; Panaino, "Astral Characters of Kingship," 575–76.

10. *Theios, agathos, eirēnopatriois, arkhaïos Chosroēs, basileus basileōn, eutykhēs, eusebēs, agathopoios, hōitini hoi theoi megalēn tykhēn kai megalēn Basileian dedōkasi, gigas gigantōn, hos ek theōn kharaktēritzetai* [. . .]: Menander Protector, frag. 6.1.177–83, ed. Blockley, 62; *en de tois anthrōpois theos epiphanestatos*: Theoph. Simok. 4.8.5; *particeps siderum, frater solis lunae*: Amm. Marc. 17.5.3. Although tertiary sources, these Sasanian superscripts preserved in Roman historical texts translate readily back into Middle Persian and closely parallel Sasanian titulature on coins and inscriptions, as well as commentary in the later Pahlavi books; Huyse, “Die sasanidische Königstitulatur,” 181–201; Panaino, “Astral Characters of Kingship,” 561–62. In addition to these historical texts, which seem to reproduce official letters rather faithfully, the later, more grandiose Sasanian titulature imprints many other genres and languages, such as Corippus’s panegyric *In laud. Iust.* 30: “Even he who boasts himself the friend of the sun, who watches the lofty horns of the waning moon and reveres and takes omens from the night wandering blaze of stars is subdued by fear of you,” trans. Cameron, 85; the rendition by Movses Khorenats’i (1.9) of Arsacid titulature: “king of earth and sea, whose person and image—as it truly is—are of our gods, and whose fortune and fates are above those of all kings”; and letters of Sasanian kings (3.17, 3.26, 3.51, 3.42); Huyse, “Die sasanidische Königstitulatur,” 193. See also Peter Chrysologus’s fifth-century sermon (120): “And are we not like the Persian kings, who lie by saying that, having subjected the sphere under their feet they trample (on it) as on a pivot in the place of the gods? Now with a beaming head, they sit in the image of the sun, as they sit in the image of the sun, as though they were not human,” trans. Panaino, “The Bagān of the Fratarakas,” 280.

11. Av. *x^varənah*—/(Mid. Pers.) *xwarrah* can refer simply to a creature’s soul or life force (*Bundahišn* 14.7–8), but early on, in connection with the life force of kings, it designates divine favor and legitimacy. In the *Zamyād Yašt* (Yt. 19), *x^varənah* is the mark of the rightful and righteous *Airīia* ruler, designated as “belonging to the Aryan lands” and “unobtainable” (*ax^varəta-*) both to non-Aryans (Yt. 19.56 or 19.82) and corrupt kings (such as Yima after his fall, Yt. 19.31), from whom it would flee in the form of a bird or other animal. This ancient Iranian idea provided a useful ideological tool, which was reenlivened and elaborated by several Iranian dynasties, most notably the Sasanians. *Zamyād Yašt*, ed. Humbach and Ichaporia; G. Gnoli, “Über das iranische hūarnah=: Lautliche, morphologische und etymologische Probleme: Zum Stand der Forschung,” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 23 (1996): 171–80; id., “Farr(ah),” *Elr* (1999) 9: 312–19. References in the *Šāhnāma* collected in M. Abka’i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs in der Sasanidenzeit*, Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik 13 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2000), 41–43.

12. A representative sampling of the many allusions to the sovereigns’ functional parallel to God: “*kē čīhr az yazdān*,” ŠKZ 1.6; “*hos ek theōn kharaktēritzetai*,” Menander Protector, frag. 6.1.1.177–83; *Pan. Lat.* 8.4.1–4; Euseb. *Oratio de laudibus Constantini*, ed. Heikel, 198–202; Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 3.179–90; “He is omnipotent, and the earthly king is the image of the omnipotent,” *In*

laud. Iust. 2.420–25, trans. Cameron, 102. Justinian's *prooimion* to his digest provides the most direct expression in official (as opposed to panegyric) discourse, though after a certain point the distinction becomes less and less meaningful: H. Hunger, *Prooimion: Elemente der byzantinischen Kaiseridee in den Arrangen der Urkunden* (Vienna: H. Böhlau, 1964).

13. "The Persians [call] 'heavens' (*ouranous*) the [audience] halls which [have] spherical coverings," Hesychius of Alexandria, *Hesychii alexandrini Lexicon*, ed. Mauricius Schmidt (Jena: F. Maukii, 1858–68; repr., Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1965), 3: 241; H. P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 22.

14. Special attention to the inscriptional sources: A. Mastino, "Orbis, Kosmos, Oikoumenē: Aspetti spaziali dell'idea di impero universale da Augusto a Teodosio," in *Popoli e spazio romano tra diritto e profezia*, Da Roma alla Terza Roma Documenti e Studi 3 (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1986), 63–162; U. Asche, *Roms Weltherrschaftsidee und Aussenpolitik in der Spätantike im Spiegel der Panegyrici Latini*, Habelts Dissertationsdrucke: Reihe alte Geschichte 16 (Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, 1983), 7–47; J. Vogt, *Orbis Romanus: Zur Terminologie des römischen Imperialismus*, Philosophie und Geschichte 22 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1929), 23–32.

15. *Pan. Lat.* 8.10.4, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 124; Asche, *Roms Weltherrschaftsidee und Aussenpolitik*, 7–47.

16. Referring to the four Tetrarchic emperors: "And, of course, in addition to the interests and concerns of the State, that kindred majesty of Jupiter and Hercules also required a similarity between the entire world and heavenly affairs in the shape of Jovian and Herculan rulers. For indeed all the most important things depend on and rejoice in the numbers of your divinity, for there are four elements and as many seasons of the year, a world divided fourfold by a double Ocean, the *lustra* which return after four revolutions of the sky, the Sun's team of four horses, and Vesper and Lucifer added to the two lamps of the sky. But neither the Sun itself nor all the stars watch over human affairs with such unremitting light as you, who illuminate the world with scarcely any discrimination of night and day and provide for the well-being of nations not only with these eyes which animate your immortal countenances, but much more with those eyes of your divine minds, and bless with your healing light not only the provinces where the day rises, passes by and disappears from view, but also those in the northern belt. Thus Caesar the benefactions which you distribute over the world are almost more numerous than those of the gods." *Pan. Lat.* 8.4.1–4, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 113–14.

17. *Pan. Lat.* 10.10.1, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 68.

18. Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 158–62.

19. *De cer.* 1.91, 410–11.

20. *De cer.* 1.93, 430–31.

21. See especially the numismatic evidence marshaled in G. Lacam, *La 'Main*

de Dieu': *Ses origines hébraïques, son symbolisme monétaire* (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1994).

22. *Bundahišn* 8.1 and 3–5.

23. *Vd.* 1.2; D. N. MacKenzie, "Ērānwēz," *Elr*; R. Schmidt, "Aryans," *Elr* (1987) 2: 684–87. On the history of eighteenth- through twentieth-century discursive appropriation of the *Arya* to create an *Urvolk*, and their *Urheimat*, *Urmythen*, and *Ursprache*, see B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 47–75.

24. *Dēnkard* 8.13; M. Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien: Le problème zoroastrien et la tradition mazdéenne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 278–81.

25. G. Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on Its Origins*, Serie Orientale 62 (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 122–23 and 129–83; id., "L'Iran tardoantico e la regalità sassanide," *MedAnt* 1.1 (1998): 122; ŠKZ 2: 9–11; T. Daryaei, *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr: A Middle Persian Text on Late Antique Geography, Epic, and History, with English and Persian Translations and Commentary* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2002), 2–7; id., "The Changing 'Image of the World': Geography and Imperial Propaganda in Ancient Persia," in *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient World*, *Electrum* 6, ed. E. Dąbrowa (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2002), 99–109. Later Sasanian kings also incorporated the Avestan concept of *Ērānwēz* into their titulature; P. Gignoux, "À propos de l'*airiāna vaējah*," *StudIr* 29.2 (2000): 163–66; for a different view, see A. S. Shahbazi, "The History of the Idea of Iran," in *Birth of the Persian Empire*, vol. 1, *The Idea of Iran*, ed. V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 100–111. After his successes on the Roman eastern frontier and with the large indemnities paid to him by Rome, Šāpūr I called himself *šāhān šāh Ērān ud Anērān*, "King of kings of Iran and non-Iran," in contrast to his father, who was *šāhān šāh Ērān*; ŠKZ 1. In his inscription the homeland of the dynasty, Fārs, is at the center of *Ērānšahr* the empire, with all provinces ranged inscriptionally around it; ŠKZ 2. In many ways this Sasanian refashioning of the Achaemenid imperial idea of an *Airiianəm vaejō* with Pārsa/Fārs at the center, their accentuation of their Aryan lineage, the title *šāhān šāh* (Old Pers. *xšāyaθiya xšāyaθiyānām*), and Mazdā-worshipping identity has many close parallels to, and perhaps linear descent from, Achaemenid developments; P. O. Skjærvø, "Thematic and Linguistic Parallels in the Achaemenian and Sassanian Inscriptions," *ActIr* 25 (1985): 593–603.

26. Theoph. Simok. 4.8.5, trans. Whitby, 114; on the "official correspondence," preserved in non-Iranian sources, see Huyse, "Die sasanidische Königstitulatur," 193–97. In the remembrance of the *Šāhnāma*, the Sasanian kings bear such global titles as *šāh-e jahān*, *šahhriyār-e zamin*, *šāh-e geti*, "World King," or *jahāndar*, "Holder of the World"; Abka'i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 47 and 143.

27. "The King of kings through his pure intelligence and surpassing excel-

lence caused these four estates, which had fallen away to be restored, and brought back each to its own place and point of departure. He kept each man in his own station, and forbade any to meddle with a calling other than that for which it had pleased God (great is His glory) to create him." *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 39. In the *Dēnkard* (ed. Madan, 2.599), Ohrmazd taught this social structure directly to the prophet; M. Shaki, "Class System iii: In the Parthian and Sasanian Periods," *Elr*.

28. *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* 1.20. Translated and discussed in relation to social structure in A. Tafazzoli, *Sasanian Society: I. Warriors, II. Scribes, III. Dehqāns*, Ehsan Yarshater Distinguished Lectures in Iranian Studies 1 (New York: Biblioteca Persica Press, 2000), 1; P. O. Skjærvø, "Class System i: In the Avesta," *Elr*. On this sort of speculation in general in Iranian thought, see P. Gignoux, *Man and Cosmos in Ancient Iran* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001).

29. *Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, 1.429.5–10; trans. Tafazzoli, *Sasanian Society*, 1. Cf. R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (New York: Putnam, 1961), 284–85.

30. *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 39.

31. The description of the castes occurs in several sources, but the *Letter of Tansar* provides the most detailed exposition; trans. Boyce, 37–38. According to Ardašīr I, playing the role of the ideal Sasanian king, nothing would destroy the empire faster than social mobility and disruption of the caste system; Jāhīz, 53.

32. *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 39 and 43–46.

33. Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 2.185–270, trans. Cameron, 97–99.

34. For useful résumés of the considerable literature on dualism in ancient Iranian religion and the opposed concepts of *ahuras* and *daēuuas*: A. Panaino, "A Few Remarks on the Zoroastrian Conception of the Status of Angra Mainyu and of the Daēvas," in *Démons et merveilles d'Orient*, ed. R. Gyselen (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen Orient, 2001), 99–107; F. B. J. Kuiper, "Ahura," *Elr* (1983) 1: 682–83; C. Herrenschildt and J. Kellens, "Daiva," *Elr* (1993) 6: 599–602; A. V. Williams, "Dēw," *Elr* (1996) 7: 333–34; G. Gnoli, "Dualism," *Elr* (1996) 7: 576–82.

35. NPi 4, A8.02–A15.02, trans. Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 28–29. The explicit pairing of Ahreman with personal "falsehood" (Av. *druj-*, Old Pers. *drauga-*, Mid. Pers. *drō*) coheres well with Zoroastrian thought and echoes Darius's ideological usage of the concept in his inscriptions; B. Lincoln, "Old Persian *fraša* and *vašna*: Two Terms at the Intersection of Religious and Imperial Discourse," *Indo-germanische Forschungen* 101 (1996): 147–67.

36. Celebrated in Yt. 10 and 14. On the etymology, see G. Gnoli, "Bahrām i: In Old and Middle Iranian Texts," *Elr* (1993) 3: 510–13; and H. P. Schmidt, "Mithra i: Mithra in Old Indian and Mithra in Old Iranian," *Elr*.

37. An especially evocative passage: "We worship Mithra of the wide pastures in front of whom speeds Verethragna, Ahura-created—in the form a boar, aggressive, sharp in tooth, a male—a boar, sharp in tusk, unapproachable, a killer

at one blow—furious, slobbering at the snout, and mighty: iron its fore-feet, iron its hind-feet, iron its tendons, iron its tail, and iron its jaws. Filled with rage and a hero's valour, he catches up with his enemies and violently . . . smites them down, nor does he deem that he has dealt them a blow or inflicted a wound until he has smashed the vertebrae, the pillars of life—the vertebrae, the springs of vitality. At one fell blow he hacks to pieces everything: bones and hair, brains and blood of men who break their contracts he mashes up together on the ground." Yt. 10.70–73, trans. Darmesteter; poetically adapted by Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, 101.

38. Gnoli, "Bahrām"; F. Grenet, "Mithra: Iconography in Iran and Central Asia," *Elr*; P. Jamzadeh, "Bahrām ii: Representations in Art," *Elr* (1989) 3: 513–14.

39. "Without actually calling himself a god, Diocletian emphasized this unapproachable and superhuman quality of his authority, not least, be it said, by the name Jovius, which necessarily surrounded the person of the emperor with an especial aura of sanctity." H. B. Mattingly, *CAH* 12 (1939), 386–87; see also Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 36, 167–71; id., *Diocletian und die Erste Tetrarchie: Improvisation oder Experiment in der Organisation monarchischer Herrschaft* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1987), 96–108.

40. E.g., *Pan. Lat.* 10.4.2–5.4 and 11.3.3–5.

41. H. Wrede, "Eine tetrarchische Gigantomachy in Spalato," *JAC* 24 (1981): 67–70.

42. *Pan. Lat.* 10.4.2–4 and 11.3.3–5.

43. *VC* 3.3.1–3; Av. Cameron and S. G. Hall, trans., *Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 122.

44. A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantine: Recherches sur l'art officiel de l'empire d'orient*, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg 75 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1936), 43–45.

45. Debating whether such imagery was originally a Christian symbol misses this image's purpose—that is, to serve as an open-ended symbol understandable to both pagans and Christians. In its continuing usage in subsequent centuries, its Christian connotation undoubtedly prevailed; A. Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome*, trans. H. R. Mattingly (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), 39. Examples in *RIC* 7: 19 and *RIC* 10: 2010, 2011, 2019, 2024, 2025, 2201.

46. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantine*, 44; cf. D. Shotter, "Gods, Emperors, and Coins," *Greece and Rome* 26.1 (1979): 55.

47. The image of an emperor or winged Victory triumphant over Eastern and Western barbarians was widespread on a number of monuments and coin types. Alongside Galerius's specific commemoration of his victory over Narseh, Tetrarchic monuments such as the surviving column base from the "five column monument" in the Roman Forum contain this traditional imagery of generalized victory over the Eastern enemy. The arch of Constantine in Rome and the column base of his column in Constantinople continue this motif. Under Constantine the Great, the coin type of a Roman dragging a captive barbarian

became widespread, and his successors continued this motif; A. C. Levi, *Barbarians on Roman Imperial Coins and Sculpture*, Numismatic Notes and Monographs 123 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1952), 41–49. On the shift in Roman art and ideology to transcendental images, see S. McCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 55–61.

48. Throughout the course of late antiquity the number of imperial numismatic types parabolically dropped. It has been argued that this trend was the result of a shrinking number of “nonoffensive” themes that a Christian emperor could use. This is only partially true. Emperors in the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries valued continuity but certainly were not paralyzed by a lack of creativity. These emperors found new modes of expression in Christian art, architecture, and liturgy that *melded* the two traditions. The conception of the proper medium for the message of the Roman emperor widened to include church architecture, and, as Grabar notes, the church itself actively appropriated imperial art and ceremony for its constituent elements in late antiquity; Grabar, *L’empereur dans l’art byzantine*, 158–62; P. Brown, review of *Clash of Gods*, by T. Mathews, *Art Bulletin* 77.3 (1995): 499–502; explored in J. R. Brandt and O. Steen, eds., *Imperial Art as Christian Art—Christian Art as Imperial Art* (Rome: Bardi Editore, 2001).

49. C. Mango, “The Development of Constantinople as an Urban Center,” in *Studies on Constantinople* (Ashgate: Variorum, 1993), 1: 119–24; G. Dagron, *Naissance d’une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, Bibliothèque Byzantine, Études 7 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), 521–22.

50. Šāpūr III’s (383–388) relief at Ṭāq-e Bostān (II) was the last relief to be commissioned until Ḳosrow II (591–628) commissioned work at Ṭāq-e Bostān (III) in the late sixth or early seventh century, which itself was the last substantial relief carried out by the dynasty, though it was never completed.

51. R. C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1992), 15–16; Demandt, *Die Spätantike*, 86.

52. For discussion of Roman propaganda surrounding the battle, see M. Azarnoush, “Šāpūr II, Ardašīr II, and Šāpūr III: Another Perspective,” *AMI* 19 (1986): 242–45; M. Papatheophanes, “The Alleged Death of Shapur II’s Heir at the Battle of Singara: A Western Reconsideration,” *AMI* 19 (1986): 249–61.

53. K. Kraft, “Die Taten der Kaiser Constans und Constantius II,” *JNG* 9 (1958): 141–85.

54. Ibid.

55. Amm. Marc. 17.5.10.

56. Kraft, “Die Taten der Kaiser,” 141–85; R. A. G. Carson and J. P. C. Kent, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage, A.D. 324–498*, pt. 2, *Bronze Imperial Coinage of the Later Empire, A.D. 346–498* (London: Spink and Sons, 1960), pl. II, 196, 424, 2625, 2295.

57. Kraft, "Die Taten der Kaiser," 170.
58. Ibid., 156–58; Carson and Kent, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage*, pl. II, 2625.
59. Kraft, "Die Taten der Kaiser," 156–58.
60. This type also corresponded to Rome's foundational anniversary; P. C. Kent, "Fel. Temp. Reparatio," *NC* 7 (1967): 83–90; H. Mattingly, *FEL TEMP REPARATIO*, Numismatic Chronicle Reprint Series (New York: Attic Books, 1977).
61. Ghirshman, and later Vanden Berghe, argued that Bīšāpūr VI, which depicts a Sasanian king enthroned in triumph over more than one group of people, portrays Šāpūr II, although the unfinished state of the relief, especially the king's crown, makes it difficult to fully prove this. Vanden Berghe contended that it was a triumph over the Romans; however, the figures' clothes and hair and the presentation of the king of kings with an elephant make Ghirshman's argument that it portrays Kušans seem more likely. R. Ghirshman, "Notes iraniennes III: À propos des bas-reliefs rupestres sassanides," *Artibus Asiae* 13 (1950): 90–96; id., *Fouilles de Châpour: Bîchâpour*, Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités Orientales, Série Archéologique 7 (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1971), 1: 79–88; L. Vanden Berghe, "Lumière nouvelle sur l'interprétation de reliefs sassanides," *IrAnt* 15 (1980): 269–82. Other bibliography and interpretations are discussed in G. Herrmann, *The Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Bishapur*, vol. 2, *IrDenk* 2.10 F, pt. 2 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1981), 32–38.
62. L. Trümpelmann, "Triumph über Julian Apostata," *JNG* (1975): 108–10; G. Azarpay, "The Role of Mithra in the Investiture and Triumph of Šāpūr II," *IrAnt* 17 (1982): 184; A. S. Shahbazi, "Studies in Sasanian Prosopography II: The Relief of Ardašēr II at Tāq-i Bostān," *AMI* 18 (1985): 181–85; Azarnoush, "Šāpūr II, Ardašīr II, and Šāpūr III," 219–47. See Shahbazi and Azarnoush for earlier bibliography. On the relief's relationship with Roman numismatic representations, see R. Sellheim, "Tāq-e Bustān und Kaiser Julian (361–363)," *Oriens* 34 (1994): 354–60. As Shahbazi notes, as early as 1800 several early travelers recognized this figure as a Roman emperor; Shahbazi, 182 n. 10.
63. In contrast to some suggestions that Mithra here refers to the Roman mystery cult, Shahbazi's interpretation makes more sense in the scope of the Iranian conception of the deity. Shahbazi, "Studies in Sasanian Prosopography II," 184–85; Azarpay, "Role of Mithra," 181–87; R. Beck, "Mithraism," *Elr*; M. L. Carter, "Mithra on the Lotus: A Study of the Imagery of the Sun God in the Kushano-Sasanian Era," *ActIr* 21 (1981): 74–97. New (primarily source) material on the Sasanians' rule in South Asia: N. Sims-Williams, "The Sasanians in the East: A Bactrian Archive from Northern Afghanistan," in *The Sasanian Era*, ed. V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart, *The Idea of Iran* 3 (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 88–97. See also B. Kaim, "Investiture or Mithra: Towards a New Interpretation of So-Called Investiture Scenes in Parthian and Sasanian Art," *IrAnt* 44 (2009): 403–15.
64. The relief had long been interpreted as Ardašīr II invested by Ohrmazd until Trümpelmann, "Triumph über Julian Apostata," argued that the relief

depicted Šāpūr II invested by Ohrmazd, an assertion followed by Azarpay, "Role of Mithra." P. Calmeyer, "Vom Reisehut zur Kaiserkrone," *AMI* n.s. 10 (1977): 168–88, rejected this, arguing that it represented Šāpūr II investing Ardašīr II, an identification defended by Shahbazi, "Studies in Sasanian Prosopography II." Most convincingly, Azarnoush, "Šāpūr II, Ardašīr II and Šāpūr III," argued again for its original interpretation: that the relief portrayed Ardašīr II invested by Ohrmazd.

65. The crown of the central figure matches most closely that of Ardašīr II. This, combined with the fact that he is the only figure wearing contemporary dress and is armed, suggests that he is the living king of kings. While it is possible that the figure who wears Šāpūr II's crown represents Ohrmazd, this does not necessarily mean that the artist or patron implied no reference to Šāpūr II, as it could allude to both the god's and the deceased king of kings' blessing. In either case the relief most likely depicts an investiture of Ardašīr II; Azarnoush, "Šāpūr II, Ardašīr II, and Šāpūr III."

66. D. MacDonald, "Another Representation of the Sasanid Triumph over Julian," *JNG* 28/29 (1978/1979): 31–33; A. D. H. Bivar, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum: Stamp Seals*, vol. 2, *The Sasanian Dynasty* (London: British Museum Press, 1969), 56, no. BC 1; R. Gyselen, catalogue entry 173, *Perses sassanides*, 211.

67. MacDonald, "Sasanid Triumph over Julian," 32.

68. Column of Arcadius recorded by an anonymous sixteenth-century German artist, Freshfield Album (MS O 17.2, fol. 13, Trinity College, Cambridge University), and possibly a sixteenth-century drawing in the Louvre (inv. 4951); McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 49–50, collects the earlier bibliography on these sketches; add to this E. Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist: Untersuchungen zu den Staatsdenkmälern des dezentralisierten Reiches von Diocletian bis zu Theodosius II*, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Forschungsinstitut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte Monographien 53 (Mainz: Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Press, 2002).

69. For historiographical discussion of work on the obelisk base, see B. Kilerich, *The Obelisk Base in Constantinople: Court Art and Imperial Ideology*, *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 10 (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, 1998), 13–17. Add to this G. Vespignani, *Il circo di Constantinopoli nuova Roma* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2001), 100–108.

70. Vespignani, *Il circo di Constantinopoli nuova Roma*, 81–88; G. Dagron, "Architectures et rituels politiques: La creation d'espaces romains hors de Rome: Le cirque-hippodrome," in *Roma fuori di Roma: Istituzioni e immagini*, ed. P. Catalano and P. Siniscalco (Rome: Herder Editrice e Libreria, 1985), 123–25.

71. Dagron, "Architectures et rituels politiques," 123–34; the Constantinopolitan hippodrome has generated a massive bibliography; for the most recent overview, see Vespignani, *Il circo di Constantinopoli nuova Roma*, 7–34.

72. Vespignani, *Il circo di Constantinopoli nuova Roma*, 57–80.

73. C. Heucke, *Circus und Hippodrom als politischer Raum*, *Altertum-*

swissenschaftliche Texte und Studien 28 (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 1994), 62.

74. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale*, 319 and 346–52; Vespignani, *Il circo di Constantinopoli nuova Roma*, 65–69.

75. The content and possible identification of the base's figures are covered in detail most recently by Küllerich, *Obelisk Base in Constantinople*.

76. The raising of an obelisk was an especially imperial act; R. Stupperich, "Gedanken zu Obelisk und Pulvinar in darstellungen des Circus Maximus in Rome," in *Migratio et Commutatio: Studien zur alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben*, ed. H.-J. Drexhage and J. Sünskes (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1989), 265–79; G. Alföldy, *Der Obelisk auf dem Petersplatz in Rom: Ein historisches Monument der Antike*, SBHeid 2 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1990); F. Kolb, *Rom: Die Geschichte der Stadt in der Antike* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1995), 342 and 424; M. Vitiello, "La vicenda dell'obelisco lateranense tra versione ufficiale e tradizione senatoria: Magnenzio, Costanzo e il senato di Roma," *MedAnt* 2.1 (1999): 359–408.

77. L. Safran, "Points of View: The Theodosian Obelisk Base in Context," *GRBS* 34.4 (1993): 434.

78. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 35–64.

79. Mayer, *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, 147–50.

80. See chapter 8 on this aspect of the diplomatic exchange.

81. A. Cutler, "Barberini Ivory," *ODB* 1: 254.

82. Inv. T.94–1919.

83. According to the accounts of Russian pilgrims, three statues of "barbarian kings" stood in front of Justinian's column; G. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984), 134–37, 184, 240; C. Mango, "Augustaion," *ODB* (1991) 1: 232.

84. Malal. 482.

85. Procop. *Aed.* 1.2.4; when George Pachymeres described it in the thirteenth century the revetment had been despoiled, and its brick core was exposed; *Ekphrasis of the Augustaion*, trans. Mango, in *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972; repr., Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 111.

86. Procop. *Aed.* 1.2.10–11.

87. Ibid. 1.2.12.

88. G. Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War, 502–532*, ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 37 (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1998), 169–85, 185 n. 37.

89. If the "barbarian kings" that the Russian travelers' accounts mention were contemporary with the original, sixth-century creation of the column, and if they were *Persian* barbarians, they would have been much less visible to the view of the envoys, being screened by the portico of the Augustaion, while the statue hovered overhead. Conversely, they would have informed the populace's view of those same Persian envoys, who would appear as walking, living, breathing versions of these representations.

90. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantine*, 158–62; Brown, review of *Clash of Gods*, 499–502.

91. R. M. Schneider, "Orientalism in Late Antiquity," in *Ērān ud Anērān*, ed. Wiesehöfer and Huysse, 247–52.

92. F. Cumont, "L'Adoration des Mages et l'art triomphal de Rome," *Mem-PontAcc* 3rd ser., vol. 3 (1932): 81–105; H. Kehrer, *Die heiligen drei Könige in Literatur und Kunst*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1908–1909); Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantine*, 131; Schneider, "Orientalism in Late Antiquity," 247–52.

93. In terms of late antique exegesis, several church fathers offered different explanations of the origins of the Magi, which Matthew refers to only as "the East" (*anatolē*). Epiphanius believed they were from Arabia, Diodoros of Tarsus and Cyril of Alexandria said they were from "Persia," and Theodotos of Ankyra thought they were from Chaldaea. In Armenian tradition they came from Persia, India, and Arabia. In any case, all of these Eastern lands were integral parts of the Sasanian empire during the time of these sources' writings. For a unique view into the Magi and the Nestorian point of view: U. Monneret de Villard, *Le leggende orientali dei Magi Evangelici*, Studi e Testi 163 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1952), 119–56. See also A. Weyl Carr and A. Kazhdan, "Adoration of the Magi," *ODB* 1: 22–23; T. F. Mathews, "An Early Armenian Iconographic Program," in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, ed. N. G. Garsoïan, T. F. Mathews, and R. W. Thomson (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 206 n. 49.

94. In the context of his history of Roman-Sasanian conflicts, Procopius, for example, uses the same Greek term as Matthew (*magoi*) to refer to the Zoroastrian priests who advise or prophesy to the Sasanian king (*Pers.* 1.3.18, 1.5.19, 1.7.19, 2.5.9, 2.8.9–10) or "perform sacred rites" at the sanctuary of Ādur Gušnasp in Azerbaijan (*Pers.* 2.24.2).

95. Such as was notably the case when Yazdegerd II (439–457) and his prime minister, Mihr-Narseh, attempted to clamp down on Persarmenia, sending many *mowbedān* into Armenia to proselytize in concert with heavily taxing the church and sending the Armenian cavalry to fight the Huns in the east; N. G. Garsoïan, "The Marzpanate (428–652)," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1, ed. R. G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 100–102; R. Thomson, "Persians, the Image in Armenia," *Elr*; E. Venetis, "The Zoroastrian Priests and the Foreign Affairs of Sasanian Iran and the Late Roman Empire," *International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies* 3.1 (2003): 47–78.

96. In early Armenian and Syrian tradition—both the Armenians and the Syrians were either under or threatened by the Sasanian empire—the number of Magi is multiplied fourfold; Carr and Kazhdan, "Adoration of the Magi," 22. The late sixth-/early seventh-century Armenian illumination of the Adoration from the Eṃmiciac Gospels follows the Greek tradition of three Magi but portrays them with a careful eye toward reproducing contemporary Sasanian no-

blemen's clothing; Matthews, "An Early Armenian Iconographic Program," 205–6.

97. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantine*, 131–33; id., "Quel est le sens de l'offrande de Justinien et de Théodora sur les mosaïques de Saint Vital?" *FR* 81 (1960): 63–77, esp. 67.

98. N. Tetneriatnikov, "The 'Gift-Giving' Image: The Case of the Adoration of the Magi," *Visual Resources* 13 (1998): 381–91.

99. N. G. Garsoïan, "Le rôle de l'hérarchie chrétienne dans les rapports diplomatiques entre Byzance et les Sassanides," *REArm* n.s. 10 (1973): 119–38.

7. UNCEASING EMBASSIES

1. K. Güterbock, *Byzanz und Persien in ihren diplomatisch-völkerrechtlichen Beziehungen im Zeitalter Justinians* (Berlin: J. Guttentag, 1906); R. Helm, "Untersuchungen über den auswärtigen diplomatischen Verkehr des römischen Reiches im Zeitalter der Spätantike," *Auf* 12 (1932): 375–436; I. Shahid, "The Iranian Factor in Byzantium during the Reign of Heraclius," *DOP* 26 (1972): 293–320; E. Chrysos, "Some Aspects of Roman-Persian Legal Relations," *Kleronomia* 8 (1976): 1–60; id., "The Title *Basileus* in Early Byzantine International Relations," *DOP* 32 (1978): 29–75; A. Shahbazi, "Byzantine-Iranian Relations," *Elr* (1990) 4: 588–89; E. Winter, *Die sāsānidisch-römischen Friedensverträge des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der aussenpolitischen Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Grossmächten* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988); S. Diebler, "Les hommes du roi: Sur la représentation souveraine dans les relations diplomatiques entre Byzance et les Sassanides d'après les historiens byzantines du sixième siècle," *StudIr* 24 (1995): 187–218; on Sasanian titlature in the diplomatic correspondence, see P. Huyse, "Die sasanidische Königstitulatur: Eine Gegenüberstellung der Quellen," in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, ed. J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, *Oriens et Occidens* 13 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006). See M. Canepa, "The Two Eyes of the Earth: Competition and Exchange in the Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004) for full bibliography.

2. On Peter's sources, see R. C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1992), 6.

3. Winter, *Die sāsānidisch-römischen Friedensverträge*, 114–21.

4. During the first five years or so of Diocletian's reign, Rome and Iran were at peace, which was eventually formalized through a treaty (287). In contrast to his predecessors, Bahrām II found himself in a precarious position, with many of his brothers rising up against him, and determined that it was in his best interests to keep friendly relations with Rome. Combined with Diocletian's consolidation of the Eastern frontier, Galerius's military successes put Rome once again in the position to be an equal bargaining partner with Iran, and after Narseh's defeat, relations between Rome and Sasanian Iran reached a form rec-

ognizable through the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. It was only at this point in the late third century that both negotiations and communications between the two courts began to take on a more formalized character. Further developments between Constantius II and Šāpūr II and between Arcadius and Yazdegerd set the stage for the system of interaction that prevailed in the sixth century; on relations in general during these periods, and the emerging familiarity between the two realms, see Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 46–52.

5. “The Caesar (*Kēsar*), and the Romans stood in supplication (*lāb-gārih*), peace and friendship towards us” (NPi 92, H16.02–H17.02; Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 70 and glossary, 106); Z. Rubin, “The Roman Empire in the *Res Gestae Divi Sapores*—The Mediterranean World in Sasanian Propaganda,” in *Ancient Iran and the Mediterranean World*, ed. E. Dąbrowa (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 1998), 181–82.

6. E.g., Justinian I, Malal. 448; Justin II, Menander, frag. 9.1; Tiberius, Theoph. Simok. 3.12.2; Hormozd IV’s flouting of convention, Theoph. Simok. 3.17.1; Qobād III, *Chron. Pasch.* 735. Along with John Eph. HE 7.22, added by Lee, all sixth-century sources are collected in Helm, “Untersuchungen über den auswärtigen diplomatischen Verkehr,” 375–436; A. D. Lee, *Information and Frontiers: Roman Foreign Relations in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 169. Chrysos, “Roman-Persian Legal Relations,” 41, considers further evidence in the fourth and fifth centuries. To the evidence considered by these scholars, I would also add Narseh’s Paikuli inscription.

7. NPi 91–95, Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 70–73.

8. *Pan. Lat.* 10.10.6–7, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 68–69; in this same vein, possibly 10.7.5.

9. Euseb. VC 4.8, trans. Cameron, 156.

10. Pacatus *Panegyric of Theodosius*, *Pan. Lat.* 22.5, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 475.

11. Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 30, trans. Cameron, 85.

12. There is an ambiguity and even a pleading tone in many of the sources that describe Roman payments to the Sasanians, where it is clear that the payments were sometimes tribute in everything but name. E.g.: “Now the Romans, who had help from God, the Lord of all, had no need of help from the Persians, for the emperors who reigned from that time until the present were believers, and their authority held firm by the help of heaven. The Persian kings, however, would send ambassadors to collect gold for their needs, but this payment was not made as tribute, as many supposed it to be” (Josh. Styl. 8, trans. Trombly and Watt, 8–9). In the negotiations between Kōsrow I and Justinian, the Sasanian envoys make the traditional request for subsidies for the defense of the Alan Gate (the Daryal Pass), to which the Romans retort, asking: *Oukoun . . . hypoteleis Persai boulontai Hrōmaious es phorou apagōgēn ekein?* (Procop. *Pers.* 2.10.19–24). Similar language (*phorou apagōgēn*) in Menander, frag. 20.2. Other requests: Balāš (484–488) from Zeno (ca. 484); Qobād I from Zeno and subsequently Anastasius (Josh. Styl. 18, 20, and 23); Qobād I from Justinian I (Procop. *Pers.* 1.16.14–9); the Daryal Pass and indemnities in Menander, frag.

6.1, Blockley trans., 71. Blockley suggests that the omission of any mention in the treaty of 561/2 of the payment of 30,000 *nomismata* for peace was a trade-off for Roman pride, given in exchange for no clause preventing the Sasanians from attacking the Romans; R. C. Blockley, ed., *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, ARCA 17 (Liverpool: F. Cairns, 1985), 256 n. 49. *Phoros* in Sasanian texts: cf. ŠKZ 8.

13. These and other examples are discussed in context in chapter 2: “Brother of the sun and moon” (Amm. Marc. 17.5.3); Kōsrow II as “king of kings, master of dynasts, lord of nations, prince of peace, savior for mankind, among the gods a righteous and immortal man, a god manifest among men, most glorious, victorious, who rises with the sun and gives eyes to the night” (Theoph. Simok. 4.8.5, trans. Whitby, 114); *Pan. Lat.* 8.4.1–4 and 10.10.1, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 68; “Leo, the *kosmos* awaits you” (*De cer.* 1.91, 410–11).

14. Peter the Patrician, frag. 13; Theoph. Simok. 4.11.2; “It is clear that great glory and credit is due in all the earth before God and men for the fact that peace has been established between the two worlds. . . . The enemies of both our states will be destroyed when with God’s help this peace is established” (Malal. 454–55); “For it is impossible for a single monarchy to embrace the innumerable cares of the organization of the universe, and with one mind’s rudder to direct a creation as great as that over which the sun watches. For it is never possible for the earth to resemble the unity of the divine and primary rule, and to obtain a disposition corresponding to that of the upper order, since it is steered hither and thither towards the breakers by mankind, whose nature is unstable and whose judgement most worthless because of its tendency towards evil” (Theoph. Simok. 4.13.7–8, trans. Whitby, 121).

15. Malal. 449.

16. Yt. 7; A. Panaino, “Astral Characters of Kingship in the Sasanian and Byzantine Worlds,” In *Persia e Bisanzio*, 569–70. On the heavenly spheres and elements in Zoroastrianism, and the Greek and Latin sources’ appreciation of that understanding, see A. De Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 133 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 304–10.

17. Euseb. VC 4.8–14; KKZ 8–11.

18. E.g., the letters recalled by Ammianus Marcellinus in which Šāpūr II refers to himself as *Rex regum Sapor, particeps siderum, frater Solis et Lunae*, and Constantius II to himself as *Victor terra marique Constantius, semper Augustus*, but to each other simply as “brother” (Amm. Marc. 17.5.3 and 10).

19. Amm. Marc. 19.2.11, trans. Rolfe, 1: 481.

20. Menander, frag. 6.1.175–80, trans. Blockley, 63.

21. Menander, frag. 6.1.203–11, trans. Blockley, 65.

22. The two sovereigns’ fraternal language parallels the Roman and Sasanian tendency to use familial terms when talking to client kings, insofar as both indicate the quality and power differential between the various rulers. However, in late antiquity, there was no hard and fast hierarchy nor a “family of nations,” as some have argued for later Byzantine history, nor were there any real

kinship ties, with the exception of a few instances of adoption and in the imagination of the later Persian epic material: e.g., Kōsrow II's supposed Christian wife, sometimes thought of as a daughter of Maurice, who shows up only in the later epic literature; P. Orsatti, "Kōsrow o Šīrin and Its Imitations," *Elr.* Chrysos cautions against attempts to interpret Rome's relationship with the Sasanians as conforming with later, medieval Byzantine ideas of a "hierarchical world order" or "Familie der Könige," as put forth by such scholars as Dölger and Ostrogorsky; G. Ostrogorsky, "Die byzantinische Staathierarchie," *SemKond* 8 (1936): 41–61; id., "The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order," *SEER* 35 (1956): 1–14; F. Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* (Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1953), 34–69; A. Grabar, "God and the 'Family of Princes' Presided Over by the Byzantine Emperor," *HslSt* 2 (1954): 117–25; Chrysos, "Roman-Persian Legal Relations," 17–20; id., "Byzantine Diplomacy, A.D. 300–800: Means and Ends," in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992), 36–37; A. Panaino, "Women and Kingship: Some Remarks about the Enthronisation of Queen Bōrān and Her Sister *Āzarmīgduxt," in *Ērān ud Anērān*, ed. Wiesehöfer and Huyse, 231–36.

23. Malal. 449–50: "[Qobād I], king of kings, of the rising sun, to Flavius Justinian Caesar, of the setting moon. We have found it written in our ancient records that we are brothers of one another and that if one of us should stand in need of men or money the other should provide them. From that time till the present we have remained constant in this." Cf. Theoph. Simok. 14.11.2: "God effected that the whole world should be illumined from the very beginning by two eyes." Dölger speculates that it could even have emerged after the treaty of 283; Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*, 60 n. 62.

24. Güterbock, *Byzanz und Persien*, 1906, 26–36; Helm, "Untersuchungen über den auswärtigen diplomatischen Verkehr," 385; Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*, 59–61.

25. *Adelphos mou, frater meus*: Euseb. VC 4.9; Amm. Marc. 17.5.3 and 10; Malal. 415, 449, and 477 inter al.; Menander, frag. 6.1.180 inter al.; *De cer.* 1.89, 406; Procop. Pers. 1.16.1 inter al.; *Chron. Pasch.* 735.

26. Euseb. VC 4.11; cf. Peter the Patrician, frag. 13; Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*.

27. T. Daryaee, "Sasanians and Their Ancestors," in *Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europaea, Held in Ravenna, 6–11 October 2003*, ed. A. Panaino and A. Piras (Milan: Mimesis, 2006), 1: 287–93.

28. For references in the Middle Persian and Islamic sources, see A. Tafazzoli, "Feredun," *Elr*; Daryaee, "Sasanians and Their Ancestors."

29. Daryaee, "Sasanians and Their Ancestors." While it certainly was not a central cause for Kōsrow II's seventh-century invasions of the Roman empire, the king of kings could indeed have used the epic history behind the "fraternal relationship" for internal propaganda justifying the campaigns, just as Heraclius imbued his counterinvasions with symbolism of David and Goliath; W. Kaegi,

Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 114, 139.

30. See M. Canepa, "Distant Displays of Power," in *Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction among the Ancient and Early Medieval Mediterranean, Near East, and Asia*, ed. M. Canepa, *Ars Orientalis* 38 (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian, 2007), for discussion of the fraternal relationships among Rome, Iran, and Sui-Tang China in the context of their diplomatic exchanges.

31. Procop. *Pers.* 1.2.1–10. Along with Börm and Greatrex, I maintain that the Roman-Sasanian adoption requests need to be taken seriously (though not interpreted legalistically). They feel jarring to those who approach the material from a discretely Roman standpoint, precisely because they were born from the two realms' cross-cultural diplomatic language and relationship not Rome's internal propaganda; H. Börm, *Prokop und die Perser*, *Oriens et Occidens* 16 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007), 306; G. Greatrex, review of *Prokop und die Perser*, by H. Börm, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2008.05.23.

32. Procop. *Pers.* 1.11.1–9.

33. Ibid. 1.11.10–30.

34. "[Kosrow I] was very ready to send high officials to the borders of the East to meet together with representatives of the Romans to consider and investigate how to end hostilities, providing they first established which state was responsible for breaking the fifty-year treaty. To this the Caesar made a very sensible reply, that since the king of the Persians was an older man while he was still young and, being in his prime, was a son to Khosro, he was ready to defer to him in what he thought best and follow his lead whether he chose war or peace." Menander, frag. 10.1.1–15, trans. Blockley, 180–81.

35. The bishop Domitianus, in a pre-battle speech to Roman troops, spoke of how "the Persians do not welcome tyranny. Baram is seated on faithless altars, for he is not endowed with royal birth. Therefore, since he has encompassed the foundation of his power with laws of insolence, he will soon be overthrown. For violence is incapable of existence without contention." Theoph. Simok. 5.4.13, trans. Whitby, 137–38.

36. Theoph. Simok. 4.2.11, trans. Whitby, 118.

37. Ibid. 8.15.7

38. *Chron. Pasch.* 709; Helm, "Untersuchungen über den auswärtigen diplomatischen Verkehr," 385.

39. NPi 92, H16.02–H17.02; Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 70 and glossary, 106; Rubin, "Roman Empire in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*," 181–82, also n. 18.

40. Theoph. Simok. 4.11; *Chron. Pasch.* 735; Chrysos, "The Title *Basileus*," 35.

41. "[Kosrow II], honored among the gods, lord and king of all the earth, offspring of the great Aramazd, to Heraclius, our senseless and insignificant *servant*. You have not wished to submit yourself to us, but you call yourself lord and king. My treasure which is with you, you spend; my *servants* you defraud; and having collected an army of brigands, you give me no rest" (Sebeos, trans.

Thomson, 79–80; emphasis mine); Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 122–25. Also in the sixth-century negotiations, Kōsrow I's envoy refers to the king as follows: *Chosroēs ho pantōn anthrōpōn, eiper bouletai, Basileus* (Menander, frag. 6.1.116).

42. Most acutely: Menander, frag. 6.1.545–600; cf. Sebeos, trans. Thomson, 79–80.

43. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 151.

44. B. Baldwin, "Peter Patrikios," *ODB* 3: 1641.

45. Diebler, "Les hommes du roi," 190 n. 9.

46. *Iesdekos*, Peter the Patrician *De cer.* 1.89, 404; *Isdigousnas*, Procop. *Pers.* 2.28.16, 8.17.9; *Isesdegousnaph*, Menander, frag. 6.1.11 (17 and 6); Agathius 4.30.8–9. Kōsrow I sent Yazd-Gušnasp on five separate embassies to the Romans (547/8, 550, 557, 561, 567). The discussions of three of these embassies (547/8, 550, 557) took place in Constantinople, where Justinian entertained Yazd-Gušnasp in the city for a period of ten months to a year each trip; *PLRE* 3A: 722–23. For further bibliography on the dates of the missions and Peter's text, see G. Greatrex and S. N. C. Lieu, eds., *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars*, pt. 2, A.D. 383–630 (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 275 n. 6. Yazd-Gušnasp was a member of the Parthian Mihrān family; Kōsrow I especially relied on him for diplomatic and military leadership, and he was murdered by Ohrmazd IV after the latter came to power; P. Pourshariati, *The Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 101–3, 118–22. Family names such as Mihrān were often misunderstood as titles by authors such as Procopius and Menander Protector.

47. Some of the information on diplomacy in these works likely derives from a lost Sasanian compilation of protocol: an *ā'in-nāma* (Mid. Pers. *ēwēn-nāmag*), "book of customs," which contained within it a *gāh-nāmag*, "book of court ceremony," which recorded court customs. Mas'ūdī describes the "book of customs" as a massive work of over one thousand pages that was in the possession of priests and nobles; Mas'ūdī, *Le livre de l'avertissement et de la revision*, trans. B. Carade Vaux (Paris: L'Imprimerie Nationale, 1896), 149; A. Tafazzoli, "Ā'in-nāma," *EIr*. The *Šāhnāma*'s description of protocol in Ardašīr's court appears to be drawn from one of these late Sasanian *ēyēn-nāmagān* and matches Peter the Patrician's account very closely; trans. Levy, 281. Güterbock remarked on the parallels between the two accounts in his fundamental work *Byzanz und Persien in ihren diplomatisch-völkerrechtlichen Beziehungen im Zeitalter Justinians*, as did Diebler in his important 1995 study on this topic in *StudI*. On Ps.-al-Jāhiz's "Book of the Crown," see G. Schoeler, "Verfasser und Titel des dem Gahiz zugeschrieben sog. Kitab al-Taj." *ZDMG* 130 (1980): 217–25. On this literature's place within the sources on court customs, see J. Wiesehöfer "King, Court, and Royal Representation in the Sasanian Empire," in *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*, ed. A. J. S. Spawforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 61–63.

48. Lee, *Information and Frontiers*, 166–70.

49. Lee, *Information and Frontiers*, 166–70; id., "Embassies as Evidence for

the Movement of Military Intelligence between the Roman and Sasanian Empires," in *The Defense of the Roman and Byzantine East*, ed. P. Freeman and D. Kennedy, British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara 8, BAR International Series 297 (Oxford: B.A.R., 1986), 455–61.

50. Güterbock, *Byzanz und Persien*, 7 and 14; Diebler, "Les hommes du roi," 188–89.

51. Our main sources, Peter the Patrician and Menander Protector, regularly make such distinctions in the sixth century, though they probably existed earlier, too. Sampling of terms: Diebler, "Les hommes du roi," 189–90 n. 4.

52. Güterbock, *Byzanz und Persien*, 14–15; Diebler, "Les hommes du roi," 189–206; for prosopographical review of the sixth-century envoys, see Diebler, 197–206.

53. As Menander illustrates: "The Caesar Tiberius sent Theodorus the son of Bacchus as envoy to the Persian king. His apparent purpose was to render thanks for the high honours lavished upon the major Roman envoy, Trajan, when shortly before, the king had received his embassy. (It was a long-standing custom for both states that after major envoys other less ones should be sent to give thanks for the receipt and friendly treatment of the major envoys.) At the same time Theodorus was told to declare that Tiberius was very ready, as they had already agreed, to send to the frontier of the East high Roman officials to discuss peace with leading men of the Persians sent by Khosro and to examine the points in dispute." Menander, frag. 18.6.1–10, trans. Blockley, 165. Kosrow I's response with a minor embassy: Menander, frag. 20.1.1–10; Lee, *Information and Frontiers*, 170–71.

54. Diebler, "Les hommes du roi," 191–92, see esp. n. 19 concerning Güterbock's interpretation of the *grosse* and *kleine* embassies.

55. Envoys meeting at the frontier: Menander, frags. 6.1 and 20.2.

56. E.g., Menander, frag. 6.1.435; Procop. *Pers.* 2.24.1 and 1.2.12.

57. Procop. 1.2.11–15, 1.3.8–26.

58. The receiving power was expected to provide for the transportation, and pay the expenses of, an embassy, and the outlay could be quite substantial. The embassy's every move was carefully choreographed; *De cer.* 1.89 passim. Procopius was outraged that Justinian gave the Sasanian envoy, Yazd-Gušnasp, unprecedented freedom to move around and talk to whomever he wished while in Constantinople: Procop. *Pers.* 2.28.38–44.

59. "Unceasing movement of embassies," Socr. *HE* 7.8.2; Lee, *Information and Frontiers*, 169.

60. A. Kazdhan, "Magister Officiorum," *ODB* 2: 1267; a likely Sasanian official would be the *darīgān sālār* early on (ŠKZ 48) or the *handēmāngarān sālār* later, while in the *Šāhnāma* this figure is the *sālār-e bār*; D. Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Bār," *Elr*; P. Gignoux, "Court and Courtiers ii: In the Parthian and Sasanian Periods," *Elr*.

61. *De cer.* 1.89, 398–400. Menander Protector offers a great deal of corroborating evidence on the border crossing; see W. Kaegi, "Reconceptualizing Byzantium's Eastern Frontiers in the Seventh Century," in *Shifting Frontiers*

in *Late Antiquity*, ed. R. W. Mathisen and H. S. Sivan (Ashgate: Variorum, 1996), 84–85 n. 7.

62. *De cer.* 1.89, 400.

63. A decurion: *De cer.* 1.89, 401.

64. ŠN, trans. Levy, 281.

65. This despite Zoroastrian strictures forbidding hot baths. However, it must be remembered that many of the Sasanian envoys and high court officials were themselves Christian; N. Garsoïan, “Le rôle de l’hierarchie chrétienne dans les rapports diplomatiques entre Byzance et les Sassanides,” *REArm* n.s. 10 (1973/74): 119–38.

66. *De cer.* 1.89, 402–3.

67. *Ibid.* 1.89, 403.

68. *Ibid.*

69. For which purpose a *subadiuva* would be sent; *De cer.* 1.89, 403–4; *Not. Dign. or.* 11.40.

70. A. Kazhdan, “Silentium,” *ODB* 3: 1896.

71. *De cer.* 1.89, 404.

72. It was burnt during the Nika riot and rebuilt by Justinian; *Chron. Pasch.* 623, ed. Whitby, 120 n. 356. Constantine VII called it the *Rēgia* or the imperial portico. In other sources it is referred to as the *Rēgia tou Palatiou*, and Zosimus called it the *Basileios stoa*. According to Agathius, this portico sheltered the public scribes, and lawyers; R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Institut Français d’Études Byzantines, 1964), 91–92.

73. Most likely reflecting its post-Justinianic form. According to *Chron. Pasch.* 528 it had its origin under Constantine, who elongated the portico of Septimius Severus.

74. *De cer.* 1.89, 404. In the Greek it is given a phonetic spelling—*rhigia*—as opposed to *Rhēgia* in other texts.

75. Euseb. VC 4.7.1–2, trans. Cameron, 155–56.

76. With possibly the three statues of “barbarian kings” visible at its base, though this would likely have been screened by the portico of the Augusteum; see the discussion of this group in chapter 6.

77. C. Mango, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople*, Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, Archaeologisk-Kunsthistoriske Meddelelser 4.4 (Copenhagen: I Kommission hos Munksgaard, 1959), 30–34.

78. Procop. *Aed.* 1.10.16–19, trans. Dewing, 87.

79. Mango, *Brazen House*, 32.

80. J. Bardill, “The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors and the Walker Trust Excavations,” *JRA* 12 (1999): fig. 2.

81. *De cer.* 1.89, 404.

82. In this case additional doors were opened into the *consistorium*, each of which was hung with a silk veil, like the main door; *De cer.* 1.89, 405.

83. Šāpūr III reportedly sent an embassy to Theodosius I with gifts of gems,

silks, and elephants; Socr. *HE* 5.12.2; Pacatus *Panegyric of Theodosius*, *Pan. Lat.* 2.22.4–5, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 475 n. 73. Zeno (474–491) was also given an elephant by the king of kings; Josh. Styl. 19. Earlier, *Pan. Lat.* 10.10.6–7, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 68–69, claims Bahrām II sent Diocletian “wild beasts of extraordinary beauty.” The inclusion of elephants would make a strong statement of the Sasanian king’s power (even to the point of being able to bestow such a weapon on his adversary), considering their importance to the Sasanian army; P. Rance, “Elephants in Warfare in Late Antiquity,” *ActAntHung* 43 (2003): 355–84.

84. These include the *chartoularioi tōn barbarōn* and the translators; the *admissionalis* seems to supervise the envoy’s placement as well; *De cer.* 1.89, 404–5; for more on the various officials involved, see Mary Whitby, “On the Omission of Ceremony in Mid-Sixth Century Constantinople: Candidati, Curopalatus, Silentarii, Excubitores, and Others,” *Historia* (1987): 462–88. According to the text the envoy waited in the *antikonsistōrion* for the court members to ready themselves in the chamber; the term *antikonsistōrion* could correspond to either some sort of “narthex-like” space before the throne room or a peristyle forecourt.

85. Identified as the Augusteus by Bardill, “Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors.” The text reflects the Great Palace in the age of Justinian, although Justin II’s Chrysotriklinos would likely have replaced or supplemented the Great Constitution and the Augusteus for these receptions after its construction in the late sixth century.

86. *De cer.* 1.89, 409.

87. Bardill, “Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors,” 217. W. Jobst, “Archäologie und Denkmalpflege im Bereich des ‚Großen Palastes‘ von Konstantinopel,” in *Neue Forschungen und Restaurierung im byzantinischen Kaiserpalast von Istanbul*, DenkWein 273, ed. W. Jobst, R. Kastler, and V. Scheibelreiter (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999); for earlier literature, see “Zur Kunstgeschichte des Palastmosaiks,” 38, in Jobst.

88. *De cer.* 1.89, 409.

89. Bardill, “Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors,” 216–30.

90. At this point these officials include the *chartoularioi tōn barbarōn*, the translators, and the *admissionalis*, who is in charge.

91. *De cer.* 1.89, 405.

92. Ibid; A. Kazhdan, “Kandidatos,” *ODB* 2: 1100.

93. *De cer.* 1.89, 406.

94. Corippus 3.235–55, trans. Cameron, 107.

95. On the origin and meaning of the royal red footwear in the two realms, see chapter 9.

96. *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 34; reflected in several passages in the ŠN: 1.113.558, 1.194.900, 1.199.969, 3.12.109, 5.10.59, 7.237.331, 7.405.1771. For changes under Justinian, see H. Herrmann-Otto, “Der Kaiser und die Gesellschaft des spätrömischen Reiches im Spiegel des Zeremoniells,” in *Imperium Romanum: Studien zu Geschichte und Rezeption*, ed. P. Kneissl and V. Lose-

mann (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1998), 355–56; F. Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, Studienbücher Geschichte und Kultur der Alten Welt (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 119–20. For the literary and historiographical context of Procopius's writings, see also A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 128–42.

97. Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 2: 158; Jāhīz, 56–57.

98. *De cer.* 1.89, 406; regarding the envoy as the analogue: Diebler, "Les hommes du roi," 189 and 206–11.

99. *ŠN* 1.112.548–52, 1.113.553–55, 1.116.609, 1.116.662; Ṭa'ālebī, *Ġorar*, 42; M. Abka'i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs in der Sasanidenzeit*, Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik 13 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2000), 78 and 178.

100. "The Shah adorned his turquoise throne, his courtiers were drawn up in their ranks on each side with all their robes embroidered in thread of gold." *ŠN*, trans. Levy, 281.

101. Ṭabarī 2443, trans., 23; A. Shalem, "The Fall of al-Madā'in: Some Literary References Concerning Sasanian Spoils of War in Mediaeval Islamic Treasuries," *Iran* 32 (1994): 77–81.

102. The various debates in the scholarship are admirably dealt with in J. D. Movassat, *The Large Vault at Taq-i Bustan: A Study in Late Sasanian Royal Art*, Mellen Studies in Archaeology 3 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 9–18.

103. Jāhīz, 56–57; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 2: 158; A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1944; reprint, Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1971), 44. Kay-Ḳosrow: *ŠN* 5.382.2472, 5.386.2542, 5.387.2563–64, 5.390.2607, 5.390.2610; Lohrāsp: *ŠN* 6.56.757 inter al.; Abka'i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 78 and 179.

104. *Procop. Pers.* 2.24.1–11; Cedr. 721.

105. "Spectatus has returned to us from his embassy, regarded by many as fortunate—by some, because he saw so much land and mountains and rivers, by others, because he witnessed the way of life of the Persians, the customs and the laws by which they live; others considered it a great thing to have seen the king himself and the jewels with which he was adorned." Lib. 331.1, trans. Lee, *Information and Frontiers*, 168.

106. According to Ṭabarī, the crown was captured during the sack of Ctesiphon. It was later sent to Jerusalem where it was suspended in the Dome of the Rock over the exposed rock. Sources discussed in Shalem, "The Fall of al-Madā'in," 78.

107. "The exalted carpet": *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 34.

108. *ŠN*, trans. Levy, 281.

109. Diebler, "Les hommes du roi," 208.

110. Jāhīz, 49–50; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 1: 241.

111. Jāhīz, 56; Abka'i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 52.

112. According to the *Fārsnāme*, before Ḳosrow I's throne (*pišhgāh*) lay a

golden chair (*korsi-ye zarr*) on which his grand vizier, Bozorgmehr, sat. Behind that was the seat of the *mowbedān mowbed*, and behind him seats reserved for the provincial governors and the high nobles of the realm. *Fārsnāma* 97; Abkaʿi-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 73 and 173.

113. *Fārsnāma* 97.

114. *Fārsnāma*, ed. Le Strange, 97.

115. Ṭabarī 2447, trans., 26–27.

116. Roman: (general term) Lat. *magnum consistorium*, Gr. *konsistōrion*. Specific location in the Great Palace during this time: Chrysotriklinos. Sasanian: Mid. Pers. *handēmānīh pēšgāh*, Farsi *bār*.

117. Wiesehöfer, “King, Court, and Royal Representation,” 58–79.

118. In the late Roman empire the chief eunuch and imperial chamberlain (Lat. *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, Gr. *praipositos tou eusebestatou koitōnos*) performed this office. In the Sasanian empire, however, a military man of noble birth or a relative of the king was the head of protocol (Pahlavi *handēmāngarān sālār*, Farsi *sālār-e bār*, “chief of audiences,” or *pardadār*, “keeper of the curtain,” referring to the veil screening the sovereign from the audience). Khaleghi-Motlagh, “Bār,” *Elr* 2: 751; A. Kazhdan, “Praepositos Sacri Cubiculi,” *ODB* 3: 1709.

119. C. Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. M. Banton (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, 1963), 5–9.

120. Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 3.179–90, trans. Cameron, 106.

121. Covering of the mouth: Ṭabarī 1048, trans. Nöldeke, 366. Hands: A. Dieterich, “Der Ritus der verhüllten Hände,” in *Kleine Schriften* (Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1911), 440–48, esp. 445–56; A. Alföldi, “Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells,” *MDAIRA* 49 (1934): 33–38. For more on these customs, see below.

122. Jāhīz, 97.

123. Jāhīz, 56–57; Sixth-century examples: *De cer.* 1.89, 405; Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 3.250.

124. “They [the Avar envoys] saw the tall men standing there, the golden shields, and looked up at their gold javelins as they glittered with their long iron tips and at the gilded helmet tops and red crests. They shuddered at the sight of the lances and cruel axes.” Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 3.235–40, trans. Cameron.

125. Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 121.

126. Jāhīz, 56; Kazhdan, “Silentarios,” *ODB* 3: 1896; D. E. Conomos and A. Cutler, “Organ,” *ODB* 3: 1532; Alföldi, “Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells,” 38.

127. Cedr. 721.

128. At the audience hall of Ƙosrow I: Baʿlami, *Tārīk* 1023–4; Ƙosrow II: Ṭaʿālebi, *Ġorar*, 699. According to Ṭabarī, the Arab conquerors found Ƙosrow I’s ceremonial suspended crown when they took Ctesiphon (Ṭabarī 1820), although the *Fārsnāma* (112) claims Yazdegerd sent it to China for safekeeping. The late Sasanian custom of the suspended crown is reflected anachronistically

in several places in the *Šāhnāma*; e.g., ŠN 9.233.3746–48 and 7.217.33; see also Abka'i Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 167–68.

129. Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 3.191. To approximate the Roman throne, a Slav king reportedly expropriated the ciborium from the altar of a church in Corinth; John Eph. *HE* 3.6.45–49; trans. E. W. Brooks, *CSCO Script. Syr.* 3.3 (1936), 250.13.

130. For specific literature on *adoratio/proskynēsis*, see note 154.

131. *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 34; *mira pavimentis stratisque tapetibus apta planities*, Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 3.200.

132. *De cer.* 1.89, 406.

133. R. Delbrueck, *Antike Porphywerke*, Studien zur Spätantiken Kunstgeschichte im Auftrage des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts 6 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1932), 24; Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 148; Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 3.250–60.

134. Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 3.250–60, trans. Cameron, 107.

135. "There the enemy of God had contrived with machines to sprinkle down rain like a thundershower and noise to clamor forth like thunder." Cedr. 721.

136. ŠN 9.220.3518–225.3609; Tā'ālebi, *Ġorar*, 698–700. In the *Šāhnāma* (9.220.3519) Kōsrow II constructed the throne in the *āsb-rays*, the "hippodrome," perhaps connected (at least in the poetic imagination of royal power) with the hippodrome in Kōsrow I's suburb *Weh-andiōg-kusraw*; Tā'ālebi places it in the "treasury." Earlier literature on the subject of the *takt-e Tāqdis*: E. Herzfeld, "Der Thron des Khosrō: Quellenkritische und ikonographische Studien über Grenzgebiete der Kunstgeschichte des Morgen- und Abendlandes," *JbPrKs* 41 (1920): 1–24; F. Saxl, "Frühes Christentum und spätes Heidentum in ihren künstlerischen Ausdrucksformen, III. Darstellungen der Weltenkönigs-Idee," *WJKg* 2.16 (1923): 102–21; P. Ackerman, "The Throne of Khusraw (The *Takt-i Tāqdis*)," *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology* 5.2 (1937): 106–9; H. P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 18–27; Abka'i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 75 and 176–77.

137. ŠN 9.223.3577–79; Tā'ālebi, *Ġorar*, 699.

138. Tā'ālebi, *Ġorar*, 699.

139. ŠN 9.223.3577–79.

140. ŠN 9.225.3596–3609 and 9.220.3518–222.3559.

141. Tā'ālebi, *Ġorar*, 699; ŠN 9.222.3564.

142. Tā'ālebi, *Ġorar*, 699.

143. Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 1.314–54; G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, Bibliothèque Byzantine, Études 7 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), 319 and 346–52; G. Vespignani, *Il circo di Costantinopoli nuova Roma* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2001), 50–80.

144. Av. Cameron, "The Artistic Patronage of Justin II," *Byzantion* 50 (1980): 74–76; J. M. Featherstone, "The Great Palace as Reflected in *De Cere-*

moniis," in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft*, ed. F.A. Bauer (Istanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2006), 47–61; although focused largely on the Great Palace in the Middle Ages, Featherstone's discussion in the section "The Chrysotriklinos," 50–53, is of interest.

145. Cameron, "Artistic Patronage of Justin II," 76.

146. Ibid.

147. Explicitly stated by Corippus: "God is in the heart of our rulers. Christ gave earthly lords power over all: *He is omnipotent, and the earthly king is the image of the omnipotent.*" In *laud. Iust.* 2.420–25, trans. Cameron, 102 (emphasis mine); Cameron, "Artistic Patronage of Justin II," 76.

148. Procop. *Pers.* 2.24.2.

149. On the topic of historiography under Heraclius and the propagandistic influence of the imperial court, see J. Howard-Johnston, "The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," in *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, ed. E. Dąbrowa (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 1994), 57–87; id., "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns and the Revival of the Eastern Roman Empire, 622–630," *War in History* 6 (1999): 8–14, 39–44.

150. Nikeph. 12.40–45, trans. Mango, 57.

151. Cedr. 721.

152. A. Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," *MDAIRA* 50 (1935): 1–6.

153. Alföldi, "Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells"; id., "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," 1–177.

154. Alföldi, "Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells," 36–27.

155. For insignia discussed in detail, see chapter 9.

156. On the formation of the Roman court in the third and fourth centuries, see D. Schlinkert, "Dem Kaiser folgen: Kaiser, Senatsadel und höfische Funktionseelite (*comites consistoriani*) von der „Tetrarchie“ Diokletians bis zum Ende der konstantinischen Dynastie," in *Comitatus: Beiträge zur Erforschung des spätantiken Kaiserhofes*, ed. A. Winterling (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 132–73.

157. Alföldi, "Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells"; Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 38–39.

158. Several later Roman sources seize on two prominent features of the late antique court: the use of elaborate clothing, especially the use of purple, and the practice of physically abasing oneself in front of the emperor. Three of these historians—Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and Ammianus Marcellinus—lived in the fourth century and appear to have used the same source, a biographical history of the emperors written under the Constantinian dynasty. Lactantius, on the other hand, although lurid and sensationalistic, is the closest to a contemporary source, mounting his vehement anti-pagan polemic only about a decade after Diocletian's voluntary abdication and Galerius's accession in 305. Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.2–4; Eutr. 9.26; Amm. Marc. 15.5.18. Jer. *Ab Abr.* 296 contains a similar report, which appears to depend on Eutropius, while Zon. 12.31 contains elements of Eutropius and Ammianus; Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 171 and 172 n. 550; G. Viansino, commentary to Amm. Marc. book 15, in

Ammiano Marcellino: *Storie* (Milan: Oscar Mondadori, 2001), 1: 220. It is possible that Diocletian was the first to have regularized the form and the usage of the practice by connecting a genuflection with the kiss of the cloak, making it the rule rather than the exception for imperial interaction; Kolb, 39–40 and 52; L. Bessone, “La porpora a Roma,” in *Porpora: Realtà e immaginario di un colore simbolico*, ed. O. Longo (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1998), 188–92; Alföldi, “Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells,” 64; W. Ensslin, “The End of the Principate,” *CAH* 12 (1939): 361–67. 188–92.

159. Already under Caracalla there was a strict *ordo* by which courtiers were received: praetorian prefects, *amici* (“friends”), heads of court offices, then members of the senate and *eques*; *Cod. Iust.* 9.51.1; Ensslin, “End of the Principate,” 363.

160. Herrmann-Otto, “Der Kaiser und die Gesellschaft des spätrömischen Reiches,” 355–56.

161. As in Achaemenid and Parthian visual culture, in the early Sasanian empire an individual showed respect to a sovereign or a deity by holding his hand before his face; this gesture was slightly modified in Sasanian visual culture from a straight hand to a loose fist with a bent forefinger. J. K. Choksy, “Gesture in Ancient Iran and Central Asia I: The Raised Hand,” *ActIr* 30 (1990): 30–35; id., “Gesture in Ancient Iran and Central Asia II: Proskynesis and the Bent Forefinger,” *BAI* 4 (1990): 201–5; A. S. Shahbazi, “Iranian Notes 7–13,” *AMI* 19 (1986): 163–75; R. N. Frye, “Gestures of Deference to Royalty in Sasanian Iran,” *IrAnt* 10 (1972): 102–7; W. Sundermann, “Zur Proskynesis in sāsānidischen Iran,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientalforschung* 10 (1964): 275–86.

162. This statement holds true for the Achaemenid and Parthian courts as well. If we believe the classical Greek texts, the Achaemenids required the practice of prostration from their court, and the Hellenistic kings appropriated it. However, when one examines the primary sources, there is no evidence that genuflection or prostration was a regular or expected convention for communicating fealty or submission in the Achaemenid court. At most, we have depictions of courtiers before an Achaemenid king slightly inclining their upper body and holding their hand to their face. This suggests that, like the diadem, in all probability *proskynēsis* was a Greek construction of “Persian” practice, which Alexander and his successors first attempted to put into actual regular practice. Certainly there remains the possibility that the Greek sources picked up phenomena that Achaemenid visual and textual sources ignored or found uninteresting to include, or picked up on rituals only subject peoples rather than Persians were forced to perform. Similarly, there is no indication of the practice in connection with the Arsacid kings either, except for when one might journey to Rome and be forced to do so in front of the Roman emperor. Choksy, “The Raised Hand,” 30–35; id., “Proskynesis and the Bent Forefinger,” 201–5; Frye, “Gestures of Deference to Royalty,” 102–7; Sundermann, “Zur Proskynesis in sāsānidischen Iran,” 275–86.

163. Frye, “Gestures of Deference to Royalty,” 102–7; Sundermann, “Zur

Proskynesis in sāsānidischen Iran," 275–86. Famously performed by the courtiers surrounding the central enthroned sovereign in the Strelka Plate: Hermitage inv. S-250; *Perses sassanides*, cat. 34.

164. Such as those fragments of the *Xwadāy-nāmag* like the *Kār-nāmag ī Ardašīr* in terms of Pahlavi material or the *ŠN* or *Ṭabarī* in terms of Islamic material; collected in Sundermann, "Zur Proskynesis in sāsānidischen Iran," 275–86.

165. *Ṭabarī* 1048; Eng. trans. in A. S. Shahbazi, "Iranian Notes 7–13," *AMI* 19 (1986): 168; from Nöldeke's 1879 German trans., 366.

166. Collected in Sundermann, "Zur Proskynesis in sāsānidischen Iran," 275–86; to this I would add *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 34.

167. Kaldellis offers a consideration of some of these issues from the point of view of Procopius's texts. His analysis of Procopius's understanding of imperial ritual is valuable, especially his discussion of how Procopius used the image of the classical Oriental despot, as portrayed in Xenophon and Herodotus, to portray both Justinian and Kōsrow I. This discussion is especially important to keep in mind when using Procopius's texts for evidence of the development of *proskynēsis* between the two realms, since it explains his educational and rhetorical inclinations for continuing to represent the practice as indigenously "Persian"; Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 73–75, 85, and 128–41.

168. *De cer.* 1.89, 406; see above for commentary; "*kata dē to eiōthos ton autokratora proskynēsōn*" (Menander, frag. 16.1.18–19, ed. Blockley).

169. *De cer.* 1.89, 406; on Justinian's changes, see Herrmann-Otto, "Der Kaiser und die Gesellschaft des spätrömischen Reiches," 355–56.

170. Alföldi, "Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells," 35–36; Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 121.

171. Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 2: 158; Jāhīz, 56–57; Alföldi quoted both of these from A. Christensen in reference to Roman culture: A. Christensen, *L'empire des Sassanides, le peuple, l'état, la cour* (Copenhagen: Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri, 1907), 97; Alföldi, "Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells," 36–37.

172. *De cer.* 1.89, 405.

8. CITY AS STAGE AND ART AS STATECRAFT

1. According to Eusebius's account, the various foreign envoys who visited Constantine brought a wide variety of gifts, including diadems, jewels, slaves, textiles, horses, and weapons. The Persians represented a category of their own; Eusebius recounts that they also brought "friendly tokens." He also mentions that the emperor gave the envoys gifts equal to those they brought, reflecting sixth-century practice, Euseb. *VC* 4.7–8.

2. *De cer.* 1.89, 406.

3. *Ibid.*, 409.

4. *Ibid.*, 407.

5. Euseb. *VC* 4.7.3.

6. The term *vestosacrani* appears to be a variant used to designate the officials more commonly known as *vestitores*, who were involved with the *vestar-*

ion, or treasury; G. Greatrex and S. N. C. Lieu, eds., *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars*, pt. 2, A.D. 383–630 (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 275 n. 26; A. Kazhdan, “Vestitor,” *ODB* 3: 2164. Titles relating to or deriving from the *vestarion* proliferate in the medieval era, and the functions of those holding such titles should not be anachronistically applied to these little-known late antique officials. These officials were almost without exception eunuchs. For the context, see K. M. Ringrose’s inspiring and foundational study, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 166–73.

7. See A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 142–50, on Procopius’s portrayal of Justinian’s reign as a “gynecocracy,” especially in the *Secret History* as one of the many rhetorical tools he uses to convey the tyrannical and corrupt nature of Justinian’s regime.

8. Malal. 467.

9. Procop. *Anec.* 30.24–25.

10. Ibid. 2.29–33.

11. For a useful overview of Sasanian silver, see Prudence Harper and Boris Marshak’s chapter in *Perses sassanides*, 69–137. See also P. O. Harper and P. Meyers, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981); P. O. Harper, “Evidence for the Existence of State Controls in the Production of Sasanian Silver Vessels,” in *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, ed. S. Boyd and M. Mundell-Mango (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993), 147–53. See R. Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity: Functions and Meanings of Silver Plate in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Burlington Vt.: Ashgate, 2004) for Roman silver plate in general, although she concentrates almost completely on domestic distribution. See also A. Cutler, “Silver across the Euphrates: Forms of Exchange between Sasanian Persia and the Late Roman Empire,” in *Image Making In Byzantium, Sasanian Persia, and The Early Muslim World: Images and Cultural Relations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 9–37 (previously published in *Mitteilungen zur Spätantiken Archäologie und Byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte* 4 (2005): 9–37); id., “Ivory,” *ODB* 2: 1026–27.

12. SHA *Aurel.* 5.5.5–6, trans. Magie, 201–3.

13. K. Erdmann, “Die sasanidischen Jagdschalen,” *JbPrKs* 57 (1936): 192–232; id., “Zur Chronologie der sasanidischen ‘Jagdschalen’,” *ZDMG* 97 (1943): 239–83; id., “Die Entwicklung der sāsānidischen Krone,” *Ars Islamica* 15–16 (1951): 87–123; P. O. Harper, “Royal Imagery on Sasanian Silver Vessels” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1977); G. Azarpay, “Sasanian Art beyond the Persian World,” in *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Parthian and Sasanian Periods: Rejection and Revival*, 238 B.C.–A.D. 642, ed. J. Curtis (London: British Museum Press, 2000), 69.

14. In Assyrian and Achaemenid art, this motif occurs in a variety of media; these include architectural sculpture, with outstanding examples from Khorsabad and Persepolis; seals, in which examples are widespread; and gold-

work. On the meanings, prevalence, and cultural significance of the motif on seals, see M. B. Garrison and M. C. Root, *Seals on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, vol. 1, *Images of the Heroic Encounter*, pt. 1, *Text*, Oriental Institute Publications 117 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2001), 53–61.

15. P. O. Harper, with a technical study by P. Meyers: *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*, vol. 1, *Royal Imagery* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981), 40–96; stucco: J. Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor*, *Baghdader Forschungen* 5 (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1982), 36.

16. L. Trümpelmann, *IrDenk* 2.5 A (1975). Important study of Bahrām II's rock reliefs: U. Weber, "Wahrām II. König der Könige von Ērān ud Anērān." *IrAnt* 44 (2009): 559–643. Bivar suggested that the two lions symbolize the two main threats to Bahrām II's reign: the Roman emperor Carus, who invaded the empire, and the king's own brother, who attempted to usurp the throne; A. D. H. Bivar, "Cavalry Equipment and Tactics on the Euphrates Frontier," *DOP* 26 (1972): 281.

17. Such as Umm az-Za'ātir near Ctesiphon, and Nizāmābād and Čal Tarkān in Iran; Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor*, 59–80, 176, 201–2.

18. In scholarship on both cultures, silver has received the most attention: Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity*, 11–49 (for silver as *largitio*); S. Boyd and M. Mundell-Mango, *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993). See also P. O. Harper, *The Royal Hunter: Art of the Sasanian Empire* (New York: Asia Society, 1978), 40; id., *In Search of a Cultural Identity: Monuments and Artifacts of the Sasanian Near East, 3rd to 7th Century* (New York: Biblioteca Persica, 2006), 57–141; Harper and Meyers, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*. Overview of silk: A. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving, A.D. 400 to A.D. 1200*, ed. E. Kislinger and J. Koder (Vienna: Fassbaender, 1997); M. Martiniani-Reber, *Textiles et mode sassanides: Les tissus orientaux conservés au Département des Antiquités Égyptiennes*, *Inventaire des Collections Publiques Françaises* 39 (Paris: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1997); A. Jeroussalimskaja, "Soieries sassanides: A. Histoire culturelle," in *Splendeur des sassanides*, ed. L. Vanden Berghe et al. (Brussels: Musée Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, 1993), 113–18; M. Martiniani-Reber, *Lyon, Musée historique des tissus: Soieries sassanides, coptes et byzantines, V–XI siècles*, *Inventaire des Collections Publiques Françaises* 30 (Paris: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1986).

19. Harper, *Royal Hunter*, 40.

20. Boars, *Yt.* 10; ram, *ŠN* 7.129.305; in this part of the tale in the *Kārnāmag* (4.10–24) a brilliant flame instead of a ram follows Ardašīr.

21. S. Tuck, "The Origins of Roman Imperial Hunting Imagery: Domitian and the Redefinition of *Virtus* under the Principate," *Greece and Rome* 52.2 (2005): 221–45.

22. R. R. Holloway, *Constantine and Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 19–25.

23. *De cer.* 1.89, 409.

24. J. Bardill, "The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors and the Walker Trust Excavations," *JRA* 12 (1999); W. Jobst, "Archäologie und Denkmalpflege im Bereich des ‚Großen Palastes‘ von Konstantinopel," in *Neue Forschungen und Restaurierung im byzantinischen Kaiserpalast von Istanbul*, DenkWein 273, ed. W. Jobst, R. Kastler, and V. Scheibelreiter (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999); for earlier literature, see "Zur Kunstgeschichte des Palastmosaiks," 38, in Jobst.

25. Piazza Armerina presents interesting architectural and visual parallels. The mosaics from Piazza Armerina, which L'Orange argued belonged to the emperor Maximian, include images of a patrician or possibly an emperor observing the hunt. The mosaics portray the proceedings in detail and do not include any "heroic" or heraldic scenes of the main figure actively hunting; rather, they represent the hunt as a sort of aristocratic outing. A. Carandini, A. Ricci, and M. de Vos, *Filosofiana: La villa di Piazza Armerina* (Palermo: S. F. Flaccovio, 1982); H. Mielsch, "Imagination im Großen Jagdmosaik von Piazza Armerina," in *Festschrift für Nikolaus Himmelmann: Beiträge zur Ikonographie und Hermeneutik*, ed. H.-U. Cain et al., Beihefte der Bonner Jahrbücher 47 (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1989), 459–66; S. Muth, "Bildkomposition und Raumstruktur: Zum Mosaik der 'Großen Jagd' von Piazza Armerina in seinem raumfunktionalen Kontext," *MDAIRA* 106 (1999): 189–212.

26. On these types of silks, see Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 68–72 and 94–98; discussed early on in H. Peirce and R. Tyler, "The Prague Rider-Silk and the Persian-Byzantine Problem," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 68.398 (1936): 213–24; and A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantine: Recherches sur l'art officiel de l'empire d'orient*, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg 75 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1936), 143–44.

27. Illustrative examples catalogued in Peirce and Tyler, "Prague Rider-Silk." Seventh century: silks with rider performing a "Parthian shot," San Ambrogio, Milan (Plate II A), and silk from Chapter Library of the Prague Cathedral, plate I; "The Bahrām Silk," a Byzantine silk of Sasanian inspiration depicting a king holding a lion cub (formerly in the Schlossmuseum, Berlin, now in the Kunstgewerbemuseum), Plate III A; "The Yadzgird Silk"/St. Ursula Silk with a king holding a griffon, Cologne, plate II D. Middle Byzantine: "Royal Hunter" silk from relics of St. Austremonie at St. Calmin, Mozac, king spearing lion, eighth century (Lyon, Musée Historique des Tissus, silk textile in Lyon) Plate II D.

28. Inv. 1934.23; Harper and Meyers, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*, 61–63.

29. Inv. ANE 124091 (1908–11–18.1); Harper 1982, 57–60; *Perses sassanides*, cat. 86.

30. Inv. — 1829.79; Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity*, 20–23; F. Althaus and M. Sutcliffe, eds., *The Road to Byzantium: The Luxury Arts of Antiquity* (London: Fontanka, 2006), cat. 62.

31. E.g., the Missorium of Valentinian, Geneva Musée d'Art et d'Histoire,

inv. C1241; the ivory diptych of Anicius Petronius Probus, depicting Honorius I, Tesoro del Duomo Aosta, inv. 669.

32. Inv. Fletcher Fund 1934 (34.33); Harper 1982, 64–66.

33. This group consists of six silver plates, cast-hammered, punched, and chased; found in 1902 at Karavas, Cyprus; inv. 17.190.394–399.

34. W. Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 114 and 139. Although George of Pisidia does not explicitly call Heraclius David, his poetry is rife with Davidic imagery; J. Howard-Johnston, “The Official History of Heraclius’ Persian Campaigns,” in *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, ed. E. Dąbrowa (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 1994), 57–87; M. Whitby, “A New Image for a New Age: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius,” in *Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, ed. Dąbrowa, 218–19.

35. Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity*, 173–208; id. [R. Leader], “The David Plates Revisited: Transforming the Secular in Early Byzantium,” *The Art Bulletin* 82.3 (2000): 407–27.

36. P. O. Harper, “Thrones and Enthronement Scenes in Sasanian Art,” *Iran* 17 (1979): 49–64; Harper and Meyers, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*, 99–122.

37. Held in the collection of the Académico Anticuário de la Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid; see Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity*, 11–14 and 47–49.

38. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, inv. 379; *Perses sassanides*, cat. 35.

39. This object is just as Sasanian as any of the silver plates. While it could have been given to Charlemagne by a Byzantine (or Muslim) ruler, as its traditional provenance indicates, this crystal bowl could just as well have been kept in the treasury of the Great Palace in Constantinople until the sack of the Fourth Crusade, when it would have been divided with the rest of the spoils between the Venetians and French; A. Shalem, “The Fall of al-Madā’in: Some Literary References Concerning Sasanian Spoils of War in Mediaeval Islamic Treasuries,” *Iran* 32 (1994): 77. Strelka plate: Hermitage inv. S-250; *Perses sassanides*, cat. 34. Sasanian enthronement scenes: Harper, “Thrones and Enthronement Scenes,” 49–64; Harper’s treatment of the Strelka plate and the crystal “Tasse de Salomon”: 57–58.

40. See chapter 9 for detailed discussion of ornament.

41. A group of studies on the problem of the seeming similarity of textiles from this broad geographical area is collected in R. Schorta, ed., *Central Asian Textiles and Their Contexts in the Early Middle Ages*, Riggisberger Berichte 6 (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2006).

42. K. Otvasky, “Zur kunsthistorischen Einordnung der Stoffe,” in *Entlange der Seidenstraße: Frühmittelalterliche Kunst zwischen Persien und China in der Abegg-Stiftung* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 1998), 119–214; B. Verhecken-Lammens, A. de Moor, and B. Overlaet, “Radio-Carbon Dated Silk Road Samites in the Collection of Katoen Natie, Antwerp,” *IrAnt* 41 (2006): 233–301; B. Overlaet, D. de Jonghe, and S. Daemen, “Pfister’s Sassanian Cocks Tapestry Recon-

sidered," *IrAnt* 31 (1996): 179–211; Zhao Feng, "Weaving Methods for Western-Style *Samit* from the Silk Road in Northwestern China," in *Central Asian Textiles*, ed. Schorta, 189–242, esp. the intriguing case of DLS 2/inv. DRMiPM2:S161 (fig. 142), which reportedly carried a woven Mid. Pers. inscription: *Šāhān Šāh*; Wu Min, "The Exchange of Weaving Technologies between China and Central and Western Asia from the Third to the Eighth Century Based on New Textile Finds in Xinjian," in *Central Asian Textiles*, ed. Schorta, 211–42.

43. No textile showing the royal hunter can be securely placed in a Sasanian context; however, there is a profusion of this imagery—which closely matches the Sasanian material in other media—in the seventh and eighth centuries, when there was an explosion of "Sasanizing art" across Eurasia. Given this later material's close correspondence to Sasanian prototypes and the popularity of the motif during the empire, it is probable, yet not empirically provable, that these images were included on Sasanian textiles. For example, an early Islamic textile now in the Rezā Abbāsī Museum in Tehran depicts a scene that is reminiscent of the imagery on the late Sasanian silver plates. As discussed in chapter 7, the image of a male figure, in some cases a royal figure, hunting occurs in several late Roman silks as well and is a clear case of appropriation. For discussion of the cultural context of hunt and quarry images in textiles, see A. D. H. Bivar, "Sasanian Iconography on Textiles and Seals," in *Central Asian Textiles*, ed. Schorta. For discussion of the phenomenon (and examples from the Mediterranean and Near East) from the point of view of its occurrence in the "Lion-Hunt" silk preserved in the Hōryū-ji Temple in Nara, Japan, see Yokohari Kazuko, "The Hōryū-ji Lion-Hunting Silk and Related Silk," in *Central Asian Textiles*, ed. Schorta, 155–72. Regarding the impact on Central Asian textiles: M. Compareti, "Evidence of Mutual Exchange between Byzantine and Sogdian Art," in *Persia e Bisanzio*, 877–80.

44. M. Canepa, "The Two Eyes of the Earth: Competition and Exchange in the Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004), 574.

45. D. Bénazeth, "Une paire de jambières historiées d'époque copte retrouvée en Egypte," *RLouvre* 41.3 (1991): 16–27. On the phenomenon of Sasanian textile material and style in Egypt, see C. Fluck and G. Vogelsang-Eastwood, eds., *Riding Costume in Egypt: Origin and Appearance* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004); *Perses sassanides*, cat. 111–112.

46. On the Sasanian campaigns in Yemen, see H. J. Harmatta, "The Struggle for the Possession of South Arabia between Aksum and the Sasanians," in *Actes du IVe Congrès International des Études Éthiopiennes* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1974), 95–100; on the Sasanian occupation of Roman Egypt in the context of the larger seventh-century Sasanian occupation, see C. Foss, "The Persians in the Roman Near East," *JRAS*, 3rd ser., 13.2 (2003): 149–70.

47. Inv. T.94–1919.

48. "Once the gifts have been handed over, the emperor says to the envoy: 'Rest yourself for a while, and if there is something to discuss, we will discuss it. We dismiss you with good (wishes) for our brother.' The envoy thanks him

and then renders *proskynēsis* again at the (designated) places and withdraws. And when the veil lowers, the *dēcouriōn* stands and the *magistros* cries out: 'Transfer!' The *dēcouriōn* then takes the armed *kandidatoi* and brings them out to the small *konsistōrion*. The emperor then stands up and all the rest happens according to custom. Afterward the envoy should be kept at the *magistros*'s reception room (*scholē*), and the *magistros* should go down to bid farewell and dismiss him." *De cer.* 1.89, 409.

49. *De cer.* 1.89, 409–10.

50. Pacatus *Panegyric of Theodosius* 22.5, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 475. This is the embassy that, according to Socrates (Socr. *HE* 5.12.2), included a gift of elephants, which were surely exhibited in the hippodrome.

51. *De cer.* 1.94, 431–32.

52. M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–68.

53. *Anth. Plan.* 62–63 (= *Anth. Graec.* 16.62–63), trans. Mango, in *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972; repr., Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 115–16. There is a subtle irony in the portrayal of Justinian as a "New-Cyrus" in his destruction of Babylon, given the Nestorian hierarchy's acclamation of Kōsrow I with this title; see above, chapter 3.

54. On the statue's form, see Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 118, no. 316.

55. B. Phillips, "Circus Factions and Barbarian Dress in Sixth-Century Constantinople," in *Awarenforschungen* 1, *Archaeologia Austriaca Monographien* 1, *Studien zur Archäologie der Awaren* 4 (Vienna: Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte der Universität Wien, 1992), 26–32.

56. Phillips, "Circus Factions and Barbarian Dress," 26–27.

57. Procop. *Anec.* 7.6–13.

58. Justinian held at least eight victory celebrations; McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 64–68.

59. Ps.-Zacharias of Mytilene 9.17, trans. Hamilton and Brooks, 263; A. D. Lee, *Information and Frontiers: Roman Foreign Relations in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 168–69. In 569 an anonymous monk from Amida compiled and continued a Syriac version of the *Church History* of Zacharias of Mytilene, whose works form books 3–6 of the total chronicle; B. Baldwin and S. H. Griffith, "Zacharias of Mytilene," *ODB* 3: 2218.

60. Procop. *Vand.* 4.9.2.

61. Procop. *Vand.* 4.9.4–13, trans. Dewing, 279–83.

62. Procop. *Vand.* 4.9.3–4.

63. Procop. *Aed.* 1.10.16, trans. Dewing, 85–87.

64. Malal. 488; S. Diebler, "Les hommes du roi: Sur la représentation souveraine dans les relations diplomatiques entre Byzance et les Sassanides d'après les historiens byzantines du sixième siècle," *StudIr* 24 (1995): 209.

65. Procop. *Pers.* 1.26.3–4; Lee, *Information and Frontiers*, 168–69.

66. Procop. *Pers.* 2.11.31–33, trans Dewing, 359–61.
67. Yet, however clearly communicated and received this statement was to the citizens of Apamea and Justinian, its full significance has heretofore eluded modern interpreters; see A. Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 182.
68. Procop. *Pers.* 2.11.34–36, trans Dewing, 361.
69. Procop. *Pers.* 2.14.1–8, trans. Dewing, 381–83.
70. Ṭabarī trans., 157–58 and 253–55; al-Dinawarī, ed. Guirgass, 70; Ṭaʿālebī, Ḡorar, 612–13; Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, ed. Pellat, 1: 307; Procop. *Pers.* 2.14.1–8. In the early twentieth century the original German excavators hypothesized that a walled section adjacent to the Ayvan-e Kesrā belonged to Weh-andiōg-husraw; J. Kröger, “Ctesiphon,” *Elr* (1993) 6: 447.
71. Kröger, “Ctesiphon,” 447.
72. *Miracula sancti Anastasiae Persae* 3.1–4.15; B. Flusin, ed., *Saint Anastase le Perse* (Paris: CNRS, 1992), 1: 123–27.
73. The trouble Kalotychos and his fellow charioteers had in getting their wages after the death of Kosrow I indicates that his innovations and foreign tastes were not appreciated by all at the Sasanian court; *Miracula sancti Anastasiae Persae* 3.8.
74. Detailed discussion regarding the Iranian cultural context of Christian Iraq: J. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qadagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 40 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 121–43.
75. G. Greatrex and J. Bardill, “Antiochus the *Praepositus*: A Persian Eunuch at the Court of Theodosius II,” *DOP* 50 (1996): 171–95; H. Börm, *Prokop und die Perser*, *Oriens et Occidens* 16 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007), 306–12; G. Greatrex, review of *Prokop und die Perser*, by H. Börm, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2008.05.23. See also M. Heil, “Perser im spätrömischen Dienst,” in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, ed. J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, *Oriens et Occidens* 13 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 170–74; and M. Canepa, review of *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, by J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2008.01.35.
76. *Kārnāmag*, ed. Asha, 2.13–20; P. Gignoux, “La chasse dans l’Iran sassanide,” in *Orientalia Romana: Essays and Lectures* 5, ed. G. Gnoli, Serie Orientale Roma 52 (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1983), 101–18. In both Rome and Iran, hunting as a royal activity followed on a long history of Assyrian, Achaemenid, and Hellenistic hunting; J. K. Anderson, *Hunting in the Ancient World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 57–82. The best overview of the sources relating to hunting in Sasanian Iran is A. S. Shahbazi, “Hunting i: In Pre-Islamic Iran,” *Elr*.
77. A. Demandt, *Das Privatleben der römischen Kaiser* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1996), 162–72; Anderson, *Hunting in the Ancient World*, 83–121; H. Schneider, “Jagd II: Klassische Antike,” *NPEA* 5: 836; Tuck, “Origins of Roman Imperial Hunting Imagery.”

78. Theodorus Lector *Epitome* 353; Demandt, *Das Privatleben der römischen Kaiser*, 167 n. 174.

79. *Script. orig. const.* 3.170, ed. Praeger, 2: 286–89; A. R. Littlewood, “The Gardens of the Palaces,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 36. See note 24 for Piazza Armerina.

80. The practice of keeping a royal hunting enclosure, or paradise, was one of the more long-lived traditions of Iranian kingship, transformed by many regimes. Although several ancient Near Eastern sovereigns kept hunting preserves before the Achaemenid empire, the Persian king of kings shaped the institution into a distinctively Iranian purpose. Such a walled enclosure, whose climate and fertility were technologically enhanced and maintained in a perfect state, represented an ideal, politically and religiously charged space. The word **pairi.daiza* entered Old Persian from Median **pairi.daeza* and is related linguistically, but not necessarily always conceptually, to Avestan *pairi.daēz-* (cf. *Vd.* 3.18, where the word has the sense of an imprisoning enclosure). This derivation suggests that the institution was primarily a royal manipulation of Zoroastrian religious ideas rather than an Avestan concept recreated by the king of kings. Along with the Achaemenid palaces, the Persian king of kings likely understood such an enclosure as a prefiguration of a post-apocalyptically perfect world, with the king of kings presaging the work of Ahura Mazdā in perfecting fallen creation. From the Achaemenids on, other peoples of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean considered the paradise to be a specifically Iranian creation and incorporated the word into their own languages; it appears as a loanword in Akkadian, Arabic, Armenian, Elamite, Greek, and Hebrew. B. Lincoln, “À la recherche du paradis perdu,” *HR* 43.2 (2003): 139–54; id., “Old Persian *fraša* and *vašna*: Two Terms at the Intersection of Religious and Imperial Discourse,” *IGForsch* 101 (1996): 147–67. In the Middle Iranian era, the paradise again became an important symbol of Iranian kingship. The Arsacids and their vassal courts, such as Arsacid Armenia, adopted the practice, as did the Sasanians who maintained astoundingly rich paradises up until the end of the dynasty. Shahbazi, “Hunting i: In Pre-Islamic Iran,” *Elr.*

81. Shahbazi, “Hunting i: In Pre-Islamic Iran,” *Elr.* For the royal hunter, see above.

82. “Sagbus ī Naxčīhrbed,” *ŠKZ* 43.10; “Gulag ī Wārāzbed,” *ŠKZ* 50.12.

83. *Husraw ud Rēdak*, ed. Monchi-Zadeh, 11–12; *Kārnāmag*, ed. Asha, 2.13–19; Gignoux, “La chasse dans l’Iran sasanide,” 109–10.

84. Representative examples: *ŠN* 7.340 and 9.211. Remains of the rectangular hunting enclosure are evident in image AE 757, which was taken 16 November 1937 during the Oriental Institute’s aerial survey flights.

85. An inscription that Šāpūr I carved in a small cave near Hājjiābād, Fārs provides an interesting parallel to the seventh-century sculptural demonstration of the king’s ability at archery and shows how keen the king of kings was to demonstrate his prowess in front of the court hierarchy: “This is the bowshot of me, the Mazda-worshipping god Shapur, king of kings of Eran and Non-Eran,

whose descent (is) from the gods . . . [rest of genealogy as in his other inscriptions]. And when we shot this arrow, then we shot it before the kings and princes and magnates and nobles. And we put (our) foot in this cleft [on this rock] and we cast the arrow beyond that cairn. But that place [there] where the arrow was cast [fell], there the place was no such [was not that kind of place] that, if a cairn had been erected, it would have been visible outside. Then we commanded that the cairn be erected more in this direction. [Now] whoever may be strong of arm, let them put (their) foot in this cleft [on this rock] and let them shoot an arrow to(wards) that cairn. Then whoever cast [send] an arrow (as far as) to that cairn, they are [indeed] strong of arm." Trans. D. N. MacKenzie, "Shapur's Shooting," *BSOAS* 41.3 (1978): 501; discussed in Walker, *Legend of Mar Qadagh*, 131–32. MacKenzie offers translations and commentaries of the rock-cut inscriptions at Hājjiābād and shorter versions at Tang-e Burāq. However, the inscription on a silver plaque that he also mentions has since been proven to be a forgery. Shaul Shaked, "Spurious Epigraphy," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 4 (1990): 267–75.

86. Amm. Marc. 24.5.2, trans. Hamilton, 280.

87. Theoph. 61.18, trans. Mango, 451.

88. ŠN, trans. Levy, 281.

89. Claudian *De consulatu Stilichonis* 1.64–66; J. B. Hall, ed., *Claudii Claudiani carmina* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1985), 193.

90. Reflecting the customs of the late antique Sasanian court, the *Buzandaran* recalls that the Armenians under Tigranes V (Tiran) showed disrespect to a Sasanian envoy by deliberately taking him on an unsuccessful hunt; *Buzandaran* 96. Similarly, when Yazdegerd I attempted to install a Sasanian prince on the Armenian throne, the Armenian *naxarars* showed him dishonor by refusing to honor him with a hunt; Movses Khorenats'i, trans. Thomson, 324; Tovma Artsruni, trans. Thomson, 136; T. T. Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 222–24.

91. *Kārnamag*, ed. Asha, 2.11. The *Kārnamag* is cited as the earliest literary reference to polo in the world, with the *Husraw ud Rēdak* following soon after; H. Chehabi and A. Gutmann, "From Iran to All of Asia: The Origin and Diffusion of Polo," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 19.2–3 (2001) 384–400. It is likely, however, that the two works emerged from the same late Sasanian court milieu.

92. *Husraw ud Rēdak*, ed. Monchi-Zadeh, 12. As it did, according to the *Kārnamag*, for his grandfather, Ardašir I, polo reveals Hormozd I's royal blood. Hormozd I, whom Šāpūr I had concealed from his father, "went to the race-course with the boys and princes of Ardašir, and played (the game of) polo. Sitting there with the chief of the Magi, the chief commander of the army, many nobles and magnates, Ardašir was watching them. Ohrmazd was far more adroit than those boys. For the sake of Necessity, one of them struck the polo-stick to the ball, and the ball fell by the side of Ardašir. Ardašir looked as if nothing was the matter. The boys were silent. Because of Ardašir's Majesty, no one dared to go forward. Ohrmazd went confidently, grasped the ball, struck it with confidence and exclaimed." *Kārnamag* 14.3–8, trans. Asha, 61.

93. Pseudo-Kod., ed. Preger 2.25.3; R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1964), 118–19; P. Antonino, "Un giuco persiano alla corte di Bizanzio," in *Atti del V Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini Roma 20–26 settembre 1936*, vol. 1, *Storia-filologia-diritto*, Studi Byzantini e Neoellenici 5 (Rome: Istituto per l'Europa Orientale, 1939), 521–24; C. Azzara, "Tzykanion: Un giuco equestre con la palla alla corte di Bizanzio," *Ludica* 2 (1996): 20–26.

94. On the social role of the *Praepositus*: K. M. Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); see also Heil, "Perser im spätrömischen Dienst," 156.

95. Greatrex and Bardill, "Antiochus the *Praepositus*," 178–80.

96. Theodosius III: A. Pagliaro, "La civiltà sāsānidica e i suoi riflessi in occidente," in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale sul Tema: La Persia nel Medioevo*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Quaderno 160 (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1971), 25–26.

97. P. A. Hollingsworth, "Theodosius III," *ODB* 3: 2052.

98. P. Magdalino, "The Baths of Leo the Wise and the 'Macedonian Renaissance' Revisited: Topography, Iconography, Ceremony, Ideology," *DOP* 42 (1988): 99.

99. Greatrex and Bardill, "Antiochus the *Praepositus*," 171–95.

100. M. Abka'i-Khavari, "Schach im Iran," *IrAnt* 36 (2001): 329–59; A. C. Gunter, "Chess and Its Visual Culture in West, South, and Southeast Asia," in *Asian Games: The Art of Contest*, ed. C. Mackenzie and I. Finkel (New York: Asia Society, 2004), 137–48.

101. *Wičārišn ī čatrang* 3, trans. Tarapore, 12.

102. *Wičārišn ī čatrang* 9–36, trans. Tarapore, 12–13. Whatever the actual story of its origin, *čatrang*'s etymology at least comes from Sanskrit *caturaṅga*, "having four limbs," a reference to the four divisions of a traditional Indian army (e.g., *Mahābhārata* 3.660, 3.790), whose combat the game symbolized. The story appears in a wall painting in a Sogdian aristocratic house in Panjikent; A. M. Belenitskii and B. I. Marshak, "The Paintings of Sogdiana," in *Sogdian Painting*, ed. G. Azarpay (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 35–46; B. Utas, "Chess i: The History of Chess in Persia," *Elr* (1992) 5: 394–96.

103. The Greek uses of the term (such as in *Oneirokritikon* 24) refer to chess as originating with the "Persians"; later in the thirteenth century Anna Comnena remarked on its "Assyrian" origins; H. J. R. Murray, *A History of Chess* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 162–66.

104. Most likely backgammon, since chess's origins in Iran are generally thought to be later; *Husraw ud Rēdak*, ed. Monchi-Zadeh, 12; *Kār-nāmag*, ed. Asha, 2.11.

105. Since the Roman descriptions of *tabla* are by this time identical to Sasanian *nēwardaxšīr* and no longer match the other indigenous Roman games that went by that name, it appears that Sasanian backgammon supplanted these

earlier games as the preeminent aristocratic board game; Murray, *History of Chess*, 162.

106. This description clearly illustrates the Sasanian game, as opposed to any earlier Roman game; *Anth. Pal.* 9.482; Murray, *History of Chess* 162.

107. *De cer.* 1.89, 409.

108. From various asides it appears that the Romans had a working knowledge of the Sasanian religious calendar. Menander (frag. 9.1.22–24), for example, remarks that Peter the Patrician spent five days at Dara while the people in Nisibis celebrated *Phroudigan*. Here he refers to *Frawardīgān*, the ten-day holiday (according to *Yt.* 13.49) that immediately preceded *Nōg Rōz*, during which the souls of ancestors were welcomed into the home; W. Malandra, “Frawardīgān,” *Elr*; M. Boyce, “Fravaši,” *Elr*.

109. Theoph. Simok. 1.10.10–12, trans. Whitby, 34.

110. Procopius was duly scandalized that Justinian allowed Yazd-Gušnasp’s translator to recline as well, and took it as yet another mark of Justinian’s overindulgence of the envoy; Procop. *Pers.* 2.28.40–43.

111. *ŠN*, trans. Levy, 281.

112. *Dēnkard* 3.419.5; Jāhīz, 167–69; A. Christensen, *L’Iran sous les Sassanides*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1944), 172–73; M. Abka’i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs in der Sasanidenzeit*, Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik 13 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2000), 80.

113. *ŠN* 1.41.48–55; Abka’i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 80.

114. *Yt.* 5.33–35, 15.23–24; *Yt.* 9.7–8; *Vd.* 1.18. Christensen, *L’Iran sous les Sassanides*, 173–74; the origin of the festival according to late Sasanian thought: *ŠN* 1.79.3–8; Abka’i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 80–81.

115. Christensen, *L’Iran sous les Sassanides*, 174; Abka’i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 81.

116. Earlier Roman imperial traditions of dining; Demandt, *Das Privatleben der römischen Kaiser*, 38–55. Although I have refrained entirely from using Middle Byzantine sources to reconstruct court customs elsewhere in this book, Liutprand of Cremona’s description of dining in Constantinople and of the Christmas feast are so redolent with archaisms that it might provide a useful sketch of the conservative sixth-century imperial tastes and practices: “The emperor and his guests on this occasion do not sit at table, as they usually do, but recline on couches: and everything is served in vessels, not of silver but of gold. After the solid food fruit is brought on in three golden bowls, which are too heavy for men to lift and come in on carriers covered with purple cloth.” Later he describes receiving from the emperor’s table “one of his most delicate dishes, a fat kid of which he had himself partaken—proudly stuffed with garlic, onions, leeks, swimming in fish sauce.” Liutprand *Embassy* 6.8 and 20, trans. Wright. The medieval Byzantine court retained a taste for fish sauce (Gr. *garos*, Lat. *garum*) inherited from ancient and late antique Rome, which Liutprand and the medieval West had evidently lost; A. Dalby, *Flavours of Byzantium* (Devon: Prospect Books, 2003), 68. Kosrow’s page recounts a wide variety of royal delicacies, including (like the Byzantine feast) suckling kid, pheasant, ox, wild boar,

venison, gazelle, sweetmeats flavored with coriander, fruit, almonds and pistachios, and various sorts of sweets; *Husraw ud Rēdak*, ed. Monchi-Zadeh, 21–58. For a recent overview of theoretical work on the politics and symbolics of food and feasting in the ancient world, see T. L. Bray, “The Commensal Politics of Early States and Empires,” in *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires*, ed. T. L. Bray (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003), 1–13.

117. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, “The Iranian *Bazm* in Early Persian Sources,” in *Banquets d’Orient*, ed. R. Gyselen, *Res Orientales* 4 (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l’Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient; Leuven: Diffusion, E. Peeters, 1991), 95–120; T. Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 11.

118. Melikian-Chirvani, “Iranian *Bazm*,” 95–120. Also Jāhīz, 50. With various passages from N. Pers. sources: Abka‘i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 82–83. T. Daryaee, “The Art of Wine in Ancient Persia,” *Hamazor: Publication of the World Zoroastrian Organization* 1 (2006): 34–36.

119. “Meanwhile the happy emperor and his holy wife had begun to partake of the blessed joys of the imperial table, the royal banquet and the sweet gifts of Bacchus, which wild Sarepta and Gaza had created and which lovely Ascalon had given to her happy colonists; or what ancient Tyre and fertile Africa send, and what Meroe, Memphis and bright Cyprus have: and what the ancient vines bear with their mature strength, which Ithacan Ulysses planted with his own hands . . . and the draughts that the farmer squeezed from the grapes of Methymna, fragrant, full of glassy Falernian. The ancient gifts of snow and light with bland taste. They poured dusky chrysattic wines into the yellow metal, produced by nature without need of liquid honey, and blended in the gift of Garisaeon Bacchus. Who will tell of all that the world brings forth for her rulers, all the provinces that are subject to the Roman Empire.” Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 2.3.80–110, trans. Cameron, 104. “These are wines all good and fine: the grape wine, when well they clarify it and the wine of Heart and the wine of Marvōd and the wine of Bust and the must of Ḥulwān. But with the Babylonian wine and the Basarangian must no wine can compete.” *Husraw ud Rēdak* 56–58, trans. Monchi-Zadeh, 75.

120. *De cer.* 1.89, 409.

121. J. C. Tavadia, “*Sur Saxvan*: A Dinner Speech in Middle Persian,” *Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute* 29 (1935): 42–45; T. Daryaee, “The Middle Persian Text *Sūr ī Saxwan* and the Late Sasanian Court,” in *Des Indo-Grecs aux Sassanides: Données pour l’histoire et la géographie historique*, ed. R. Gyselen, *Res Orientales* 17 (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l’Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 2007), 65–80.

122. *Husraw ud Rēdak* 62–63, trans. Monchi-Zadeh, 76–77. The Middle Persian “dinner speech” thanks the musicians and cooks; Tavadia, “*Sur Saxvan*,” p. 47, l. 18b; M. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Les instruments de musique dans l’art sassanide*, *Iranica Antiqua Supplément* 6 (Ghent: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1993). See Daryaee’s synthesis: Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 50–51.

123. Demandt, *Das Privatleben der römischen Kaiser*, 54–55; A. Karpozilos and A. Kazhdan, "Dance," *ODB* 1: 582.
124. Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 3.110–25, trans. Cameron, 104–5.
125. Melikian-Chirvani, "Iranian Bazm," 95–120; Abka'i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs*, 82–83 and 186–87.
126. Shalem, "The Fall of al-Madā'in," 78–79.
127. Buzandaran 5.2.195–96, trans. Garsoïan, 188. See Garsoïan's commentary on this passage's epic and historical parallels (p. 308), and article "The Locus of the Death of Kings: Iranian Armenia—The Inverted Image," reprinted among her other masterful studies in *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985) XI.27–64.
128. Buzandaran 5.2.195–96, trans. Garsoïan, 188.
129. Theoph. Simok. 5.5.8–11, trans. Whitby, 139.
130. The revolt of Bahrām Čobin, a Mihrān, was especially threatening, as the usurper presented it as a resurgence of the Arsacid dynasty and final destruction of the "upstart" Sasanians, something that actually came closer to fruition with the rebellion of Šahrvarāz, also a Mihrān, after the king of kings' death; P. Pourshariati, *The Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 125–27, 142–43, 176–207.
131. Procop. *Pers.* 1.17.26–30.
132. Theoph. Simok. 5.2.7–3.9.
133. *Anonymous Guidi*, trans. T. Nöldeke, "Die von Guidi herausgegebene syrische Chronik," *SBWein* 128 (1893): 16.

9. THE LATE ANTIQUE KOSMOS OF POWER

1. J. Strzygowski, "Antiochische Kunst," *Oriens Christianus* 2 (1902): 421; id., *Orient oder Rome: Beiträge zur Geschichte der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1901); id., *L'ancien art chrétien de Syrie: Son caractère et son évolution d'après les découvertes de Vogüé et de l'expédition de Princeton; la façade de Mschatta et le calice d'Antioch* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1936); A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople*, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie d'Istanbul 17 (Paris: Librairie Adrien-Masonneuve, 1963), 64–65; F. Sarre, *Die Kunst des alten Persien*, Die Kunst des Ostens 5 (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1922), 44–45; C. Diehl, *Manuel d'art byzantine* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1925), 1: 48–49; A. Alföldi, "Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zereemoniells," *MDAIRA* 49 (1934): 36–27; A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin: Recherches sur l'art officiel de l'empire d'orient*, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg 75 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1936), 133–44; id., "Le rayonnement de l'art sassanide dans le monde chrétien," in *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Quaderno* 160 (1971): 679–707, esp. 686–88; K. Erdmann, "Die universalgeschichtliche Stellung der sassanidischen Kunst," *Sæculum* 1 (1950): 508–54; R. Ettinghausen, *From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran*

and the Islamic World: Three Modes of Artistic Influence, The L. A. Mayer Memorial Studies in Islamic Art and Archaeology 3 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 1–2; R. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Châpour: Bichâpour*, vol. 2, Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités Orientales, Série Archéologique 7 (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1956); id., *Persian Art: The Parthian and Sassanian Dynasties, 249 B.C.–A.D. 651*, trans. S. Gilbert and J. Emmons (New York: Golden Press, 1962), 119–24 and 287–93; H. von Gall, “Die Mosaiken von Bishapur,” *AMI* 4 (1971): 193; C. Mango, “Storia del arte,” in *La civiltà bizantina dal IV al IX secolo*, 289–350, Università degli Studi di Bari Centro di Studi Bizantini, Corso di Studi, I, 1976 (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1977), 289–350; P. O. Harper, *The Royal Hunter: Art of the Sasanian Empire* (New York: Asia Society, 1978), 17–18 and 167; C. D. Sheppard, “A Note on the Date of Taq-i-Bustan and Its Relevance to Early Christian Art in the Near East,” *Gesta* 20.1 (1981): 9–13; J. Boardman, *The Diffusion of Classical Art in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 80–98 (Parthians), 98–99 (Sasanians); D. Huff, “Architecture sassanide,” in *Splendeur des Sassanides: L’empire perse entre Rome et la Chine (224–642)*, ed. L. Vanden Berghe et al. (Brussels: Musée Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire, 1993), 45–46; G. Azarpay, “Sasanian Art beyond the Persian World,” in *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Parthian and Sasanian Periods: Rejection and Revival, 238 B.C.–A.D. 642*, ed. J. Curtis (London: British Museum Press, 2000), 67–75; E. Russo, “La scultura di S. Polieucto e la presenza della Persia nella cultura artistica di Costantinopoli nel VI secolo,” in *Persia e Bisanzio*, 737–826; R. Gyselen, “Note de glyptique sassanide: Le phénomène des motifs iconographiques communs à l’Iran sassanide et au bassin méditerranéen,” in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, ed. J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, *Oriens et Occidens* 13 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 83–103; J. Balty, “Mosaïques romaines, mosaïques sassanides: Jeux d’influences réciproques,” in *Ērān ud Anērān*, ed. Wiesehöfer and Huyse, 29–44. Sources related to H. Polyuktos are discussed below.

2. H. Meredith, “Disentangling Material Cultures: Late Roman and Sasanian Facet Cut Glassware in Late Antiquity,” in *Soma 2004 Symposium on Mediterranean Archaeology* (Oxford: BAR, 2006), 123–30; P. O. Harper, “A Gilded Silver Vessel: Iran and Byzantium in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries A.D.,” in *Of Pots and Pans: Papers on the Archaeology and History of Mesopotamia and Syria Presented to David Oates in Honour of his 75th Birthday*, ed. L. al-Galaini Werr et al. (London: NABU, 2002), 113–27; M. Mundell-Mango, “Byzantine, Sasanian, and Central Asian Silver,” in *Kontakte zwischen Iran, Byzanz und der Steppe im 6.-7. Jahrhundert*, ed. C. Bálint, *Varia Archaeologica Hungarica* 9 (Budapest: Varia Archaeologica, 2000), 267–85; Gyselen, “Note de glyptique sassanide,” in *Ērān ud Anērān*, ed. Wiesehöfer and Huyse, 83–103; id., “Sasanian Glyptic, An Example of Cultural Interaction between the Hellenistic World and the Iranian World,” in *Coins, Art, and Chronology*, ed. M. Alram and D. E. Klimburg-Salter (Vienna: VÖAW, 1999), 293–301; C. Fluck and G. Vogelsang-Eastwood, eds., *Riding Costume in Egypt: Origin and Appearance* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004); E. Lucchesi-Palli, “Orientalische

Einflüsse in einigen Trachten der Wandmalereien von Bawit," in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. C. Moss and K. Kiefer (Princeton: Dept. of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, 1995), 266–76; id., "Geometrische und florale Ornamente in den Wandmalereien von Bawit," *Boreas* 13 (1990): 1–21; id., "Jagdszenen und decorative Tierdarstellungen in den Wandmalereien von Bawit," *Boreas* 11 (1988): 156–76; Balty, "Mosaïques romaines, mosaïques sassanides," 40–42; id., *Mosaïques antiques du Proche-Orient* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995), 97–100; D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1971), 1: 313–15, 350–55, 478–79; H. Torp, "Un décor de voûte controversé: L'ornementation 'sassanide' d'une mosaïque de la Rotonde de Saint-Georges à Thessalonique," *Acta IRNorv* n.s. 14 (2001): 295–18.

3. First discussed in depth by Grabar, "Le rayonnement de l'art sassanide."

4. Bourdieu's extrapolation of Max Weber describes the state as "the culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital:—capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) informational capital, and symbolic capital." Bourdieu's formulation describes the Roman and Sasanian empires more accurately than the formulations of Marx, Lenin, or Weber, which concern themselves only with economic capital, or violence, real or symbolic, and ignore the impact of systems of *symbolic capital* that articulated these late antique societies. P. Bourdieu, *Practical Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 41, 47 and 92–123.

5. "The nobles are distinguished from the artisans and tradespeople by their dress and horses and trappings of pomp, and their women likewise by silken garments; also by their lofty dwellings, their trousers, headgear, hunting and whatever else is customary for the noble." *Letter of Tansar*, trans. Boyce, 43–46 and 48–49. From his (of course) hostile view, looking at the culture from the outside, Agathius described some Persian soldiers wearing "solid gold collars and necklaces and ear-rings and all the other foppish and effeminate ornaments that the more aristocratic Persians bedeck themselves with in order to cut a dash and distinguish themselves from the common people." Agathius 3.5, trans. Frendo, 99.

6. "And among the clothes the garment which is red and wine colored adorned with all kinds of ornament with silver and gold chalcedony and shining ruby (belongs to warriors)"; "Vāy, the Good, donned a garment of gold and silver, adorned with precious stones, purple and multicolored (namely) the costume of warriorhood." *Dēnkard* 206.3; *Bundahišn* 31; translations after A. Tafazzoli, *Sasanian Society: I. Warriors, II. Scribes, III. Dehqāns*, Ehsan Yarshater Distinguished Lectures in Iranian Studies 1 (New York: Biblioteca Persica Press, 2000), 1. Qobād was recognized as a prince because he had gold stitching on his trousers; Ṭabarī trans, 129; Ba'lamī, *Tārik*, 964; M. Abka'i Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs in der Sasanidenzeit*, Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik 13 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2000), 59 and 161, sect. f.5.1.

7. Such as Kōsrow I's gift of a crown and robe to a recently installed vassal king in Yemen, countering the Romans' attempt at military and cultural influence by way of Ethiopia; Ṭa'ālebi, *Gōrar*, 617–18; also Abka'i Khavari, 63.

8. Amm. Marc. 18.5.6–7.
9. Procop. *Pers.* 1.17.26–30, trans. Dewing.
10. KKZ 4; E. H. Peck, “Belts ii: In the Parthian and Sasanian periods,” *Elr.*
11. The late antique style of belts with hanging plaques, of the sort that are abundantly recorded here, was shared by Romans and Avars; E. Garam, “Über die Beziehung der byzantinischen Goldschnallen und der Awarenzeitlichen Pseudoschnallen,” in *Kontakte zwischen Iran, Byzanz und der Steppe*, ed. Bálint, 215–27; G. Gropp, “Der Gürtel mit Riemenzungen auf sassanidischen Relief in der Großen Grotte des Taq-e Bostan,” *AMI* n.s. 3 (1970): 273.
12. Representative examples in the British Museum: WA 1863–12–3, 1/119994; WA 1969–2–10, 2/136071; WA 1966–7–23, 1/134847; WA 1854–4–1, 21/120202; WA 119996; WA 119983; WA 1854–4–1, 20/119735.
13. “Each Sasanian king had his own crown which was designed especially for him! It is so to speak the guiding fossil of the entire Sasanian art and its descendants. The crown has become an infallible means of identifying the royal individual, a property which is met only with Iranian crowns and which is nowhere so strictly adhered to as among the Sasanians.” R. Göbl, *Sasanian Numismatics*, trans. P. Severan (Braunschweig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1971), 7; account of older literature from Herzfeld on, concerning the “Gesetz” of the Sasanian crown: P. Calmeyer, “Vom Reisehut zur Kaiserkrone,” *AMI* n.s. 10 (1977): 186–87. The Islamic sources reflect the numismatic and rupestrian evidence. Along with other details of their reigns, Ḥamza al-İṣfahānī describes the color of the clothing of each of the Sasanian kings, and their crowns; with the exception of the last kings, these details are most likely made up, yet they probably preserve a memory of a tradition of individualized clothing; “The Annals of Ḥamzah al-İṣfahānī,” trans. U. M. Daupota, *Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute* 21 (1932): 58–120. These changes could be subtle, with some significant appropriation of the imagery of previous rulers or gods. For example, on the transformation of the Sasanian crown from Šāpūr to the second reign of Qobād I, see N. Schindel, *Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum Paris Berlin Wein*, Bd. III.1, *Shapur II.–Kawad I./2. Regierung*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 325, Veröffentlichungen der Numismatischen Kommission 42 (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 65–72.
14. Jāhīz, 75.
15. *Ibid.*, 173.
16. See above, chapter 4.
17. Naqš-e Rostam II and Sarāb-e (Naqš-e) Bahrām.
18. The Mongol term *tamga* and the Mid. Pers. word *nīšān* are (sometimes interchangeable) scholarly terms used to refer to Iranian clan signs (the only Iranian word that is directly applied to the phenomenon is Osetian *gakk*). The most extensive study of Iranian clan signs: S. A. Yatsenko, *Znaki-tamgi irano-yazuchnikh narodov drevnosty i rannego srednevekov'ya* (Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatur, 2001). Earlier studies: A. D. H. Bivar, “Details and ‘Devices’ from the Sassanian Sculptures,” *Oriental Art* 5 (1959): 11–14; R. N. Frye, “Sym-

bols, Monograms, and Devices in Ancient Iran," in J. M. *Unvala Memorial Volume* (Bombay: Kaikhusroo M. Jamaspa, 1964), 181–84.

19. Galerius was the first emperor to whom such a term was applied; he was called *purpuratus* ("clothed in the purple"); Eutr. 9. 24; F. Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, Studienbücher Geschichte und Kultur der Alten Welt (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 49; later use of *purpuratus*: L. Bessone, "La porpora a Roma," in *Porpora: Realtà e immaginario di un colore simbolico*, ed. O. Longo (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1998), 191 and n. 206. Already in use by the sixth century, the Greek term *porphyrogenetos*, became a celebrated part of imperial titles and even the birthing ceremony (*Decer.* 2.21) in the medieval era; G. Ostrogorsky and E. Stein, "Die Krönungsordnungen des Zeremonienbuches: Chronologische und verfassungsgeschichtliche Bemerkungen," *Byzantion* 7 (1932): 199; M. McCormick, "Porphyrogenetos," *ODB* 3: 1701.

20. Until the first century B.C.E., the *paludamentum* was worn only outside Rome and Italy. With the absence of the emperors from Rome beginning in the last decade of the second century and the growing importance of the emperor's military prowess in the third century, the *paludamentum* became one of the most prominent elements of imperial insignia; Herodian 2.8.6; Alföldi, "Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells," 161. It played a central role in Diocletian's investiture of his colleagues and those of the later fourth and fifth centuries under Julian, Valentinian I, Theodosius I, and Leo I; Bessone, "La porpora a Roma," 189; Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 98–102.

21. The purple workshops in Tyre became imperial property. The prices for different qualities of purple wool and silk materials are given in Diocletian's Price Edict (24), indicating their availability, but they soon became increasingly restricted under subsequent emperors. See Bessone, "La porpora a Roma," 195; G. Steigerwald, "Die Purpursorten im Preisedikt Diokletians vom Jahre 301," *ByzF* 15 (1990): 219–76; id., "Das kaiserliche Purpurprivileg," in *JbAC* 33 (1990): 209–39; H. Schneider, "Purpur," *NPEA* 10: 603; M. Reinhold, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity*, *Latomus* 116 (Brussels, 1970), 59; A. Demandt, *Die Spätantike: Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian 284–565 n. Chr.*, *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* 3.6 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1989), 222–23; R. Delbrueck, "Der spätantike Kaiserornat," *Die Antike* 8 (1932): 1–22; id., *Antike Porphywerke*, *Studien zur Spätantiken Kunstgeschichte im Auftrage des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 6 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1932), 26–29; A. Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," *MDAIRA* 50 (1935): 57.

22. The emperors exerted greater imperial control over the city, the basic political entity of the Roman world, with a noticeable flow of power and status away from local offices to imperial positions. According to inscriptional evidence, during the third and fourth centuries local aristocrats stopped recording their local offices and philanthropy almost completely. In the place of this ancient tradition, a new style of verse inscription emerged in the Eastern provinces that records imperial titles to the virtual exclusion of all others. Likewise the tradition of building public amenities begins to disappear about this time, since real

power and status lay only in imperial service. See J. B. Ward-Perkins, "The Cities," *CAH* 13 (1998): 372–82.

23. I. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, "The Imperial Chamber at Luxor," *DOP* 29 (1975): 245–46; J. G. Deckers, "Die Wandmalerei im Kaiserkultraum von Luxor," *JbDAI* 94 (1979): 600–652; Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 175–86.

24. W. Ensslin, "The End of the Principate," *CAH* 12 (1939): 382; C. Kelly, "Emperors, Government, and Bureaucracy," *CAH* 13 (1998): 168.

25. Thus a new name was created to distinguish bureaucratic from military service (*militia armata*); Ensslin, "End of the Principate," 382.

26. Kelly, "Emperors, Government, and Bureaucracy," 168.

27. *Ibid.*, 168 and 170–71.

28. Unfortunately, Stephani, Krücke, and Keysener largely skip over the Sasanians. Other accounts focus mainly on the nimbus as a Christian iconographical element. L. Stephani, "Nimbus und Strahlenkranz in den Werken der alten Kunst," *MASP* 9 (1859): 361; A. O. H. Krücke, *Der Nimbus und verwandten Attribute in der frühchristlichen Kunst* (Strasbourg: Universitäts-buchdruckerei von Heitz, 1905); Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," 157–63; Keysener, "Nimbus," *RE* 17.1 (1937): 598.

29. Previous scholarship on the nimbus has often conflated it with solar rays or the rayed crown, in either meaning or derivation, which has caused some confusion. Although the solar rays might have contributed to a precursor of the nimbus, in both cultures the rays and the nimbus were two discrete things. The rayed crown and the few instances of the rayed nimbus are generally unconnected temporally or culturally to the Roman and Sasanian nimbus. Several divinities, especially Helios, were represented with a rayed crown or even a rayed nimbus in Etruscan and Southern Italian vase painting, and Apollo-Mithras appears with a rayed nimbus as he clasps the hand of Antiochus I in a bas-relief from Sofraz Köy (mid-first century B.C.E.), though there is a great divide between these and late antique imperial representations. Bergmann is right insofar as she understands that the "Strahlenaureole" on Hellenistic numismatic portraits derives from Greek solar, theomorphic representations, rather than from the Iranian concept of *Xʷarənah*-. From Julius Caesar on, Roman rulers adopted the rayed crown from Hellenistic royal iconography to portray deified emperors, and later for divine assimilation. However, by the middle of the third century, the rayed crown became a fossilized feature of obverse portraits on the *antonianus* and had lost most of its original significance, designating little more than the purported weight of the coin; M. Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher: Theomorphes Herrscherbild und politische Symbolik im Hellenismus und in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1998), 40–89 and 289–90. It is possible that the rayed nimbus of the Commagenian Mithras-Apollo established a precedent or participated in a larger tradition of representation. It is difficult to ascertain whether it became a standard element of this god's iconography, but the depiction of Kušān Mīro with a rayed nimbus on coins of Huviška and of Mihr in Ṭāq-e Bostān I with a similar rayed nimbus would

suggest this. As regards the impact of this feature on Sasanian royal representations, only Bahrām I's crown has rays, though these are attributes, like the wings, or the crescents that appear in addition to, but not as a replacement for, the *korymbos*.

30. Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher*, 58–61.

31. First, the Kušāns' gods (including Mao, Miiro, and the Buddha) receive the nimbus, and then the rulers. It is possible that the nimbus, especially the rayed nimbus, participated in the tradition of Greek, then Greco-Iranian, representations of the sun god (either Helios or Mithras-Apollo). Huviška (ca. 126–163) is the first Kušan king to adopt the nimbus on his coins; R. Göbl, *System und Chronologie der Münzprägung des Kušānsreiches* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), 14–15 and pl. 16, 190.1; J. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 197–201.

32. The flaming shoulders were part of Kušan royal representation relatively early on; see the coins of Wima Kadphises (ca. 75–100); Göbl, *System und Chronologie der Münzprägung*, coin 1.1. This royal attribute was later incorporated into Buddhist hagiographies of Kaniška, not to mention representations of bodhisattvas. One Sasanian king, Balāš, adopted this motif (which appears only on his right shoulder); however, this was not a widespread or long-lived attribute in Sasanian coin types; Göbl, *Sasanian Numismatics*, 15 and pl. 11.179.

33. The Greek word *korymbos* or Latin word *corymbus* (both meaning “cluster” or “uppermost point”) has become a scholarly convention used to refer to the spherical shape on the top of Sasanian crowns, though it is not an indigenous term.

34. A. H. Dani and B. A. Litvinsky, “The Kushano-Sasanian Kingdom,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. 3, *The Crossroads of Civilizations: A.D. 250 to 750*, ed. B. A. Litvinsky, Zhang Guang-da, and R. Shabani Samghabadi (Paris: UNESCO, 1992), 104–5.

35. Göbl, *System und Chronologie der Münzprägung*, see pls. 62–63: 702.1–710.9; Ormazd adopts the *korymbos* and keeps the nimbus (707.1–7), but Pērōz IV eventually loses the nimbus (711.1–712.2).

36. Initial push under Ardašīr I and Šāpūr I and firmer incorporation under Šāpūr II; R. N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1984), 262, 310–11; Dani and Litvinsky, “Kushano-Sasanian Kingdom,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. Litvinsky et. al., 103–8.

37. E.g., Verg. *Aen.* 8.675; Suet. *Div. Aug.* 79.2; M. R.-Alföldi, *Bild und Bildersprache der römischen Kaiser: Beispiele und Analysen*, Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt 81 (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1999), 48–49. The rayed nimbus was a subdued but constant element of Greco-Roman divine, and especially solar, representation, which, along with more geographically distant but visually closer Kušan numismatic imagery, may have provided ready inspiration, if indeed prototypes were used. Exceptional Roman imperial appearances before Diocletian

reflecting “divine assimilation” rather than “divine kingship”: reverse of *sestertius* of Antoninus Pius, 145 C.E., emperor with radiate nimbus, *RIC* 3: 124, no. 756; reverse of *denarius* of Septimius Severus, 203 C.E., two horsemen, said to be the emperor and his son Geta, one with rayed nimbus, *RIC* 4: 1.319, no. 37a. A fragmentary fresco from an apsidal structure in Sabratha, Libya, depicts what its interpreters consider to be the apotheosis of Marcus Aurelius. The fresco depicted a bearded male figure reclining against a blue starry background, wearing a gold laurel-wreath crown and with a blue nimbus around his head. A representation of the zodiac encircles this central figure, while other personifications, such as Tellus, attend him. This image clearly assimilates the attributes of a cosmic figure but does not reflect official representations, nor, considering its dark blue color, does it have the same connections with light as the later Iranian and Tetrarchic royal nimbuses. See G. Caputo and F. Ghedini, *Il Tempio d’Ercole di Sabratha*, Monografie di Archeologia Libica 19 (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1984), 36–53, pls. 19.1 and 23.1; A. Ahlqvist, *Tradition och rörelse: Nimbusikonografen i den romerskantik och fornkristna konsten*, Historiallisia Tukimuksia 155 (Helsinki: Societas Historica Finlandiae, 1990), cat. nos. 1–3, pp. 237–38; id., “Cristo e l’imperatore romano: I valaori simbolici del nimbo,” *Acta IR Norv* n.s. 14 (2001): 203–27.

38. Alföldi, “Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser,” 144; P. Bastien, *Le monnayage de l’atelier de Lyon (274–413): Le médaillon de plomb de Lyon*, Numismatique Romaine 18, ed. P. Bastien, M. Amandry, and G. Gautier (Wetteren: Numismatique Romaine, 1988), 7; Alföldi, *Bild und Bildersprache*, 49.

39. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, “The Imperial Chamber at Luxor,” 245–46; Deckers, “Die Wandmalerei im Kaiserkultraum,” 600–652; description, 642.

40. *Pan. Lat.* 10.3.2, trans. Nixon and Rodgers, 58.

41. Alföldi, “Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser,” 145. The nimbus was a marker of a divinity in Roman art, too, and the Christian nimbus emerged from a complex interplay between nimbuses on divinities in the context of traditional Greco-Roman polytheism, mystery cults, and the *imperatores sacratissimi*, who themselves were divine beings of some sort; Ahlqvist, *Tradition och rörelse*; id., “Cristo e l’imperatore romano,” 207–28.

42. Corippus *In laud. Iust.* 1.149, 2.299, 3.213.

43. The Sasanians developed other ways to express their *xwarrah* visually on their coins, that relate and contribute to the ideas behind the disk nimbus. From the time of Bahrām V (420–438) a ring punctuated on its outer edges by four crescent moons cradling stars surrounds Sasanian obverse portraits. In later issues the king of kings’ crown extends beyond the ring, and the crescent and star of his *korymbos* take the place of the top crescent and star. Kōsrow II introduced several innovations in both type and legend to Sasanian silver and gold coinage that relate to the expression of *xwarrah*. In the second year of his reign, when he began wearing his own personal crown rather than that of his father, he added the legend *hwslwb GDH bzwt* (“May the *xwarrah* of Kōsrow increase”) to the obverse of the silver drachm, making specific in a sense what the ring denoted. In some rare gold and silver issues Kōsrow II introduced a reverse type

depicting a deity whose head was surrounded with a flaming nimbus, which accompanied equally exceptional frontal obverse portraits. The reverse deity has been interpreted variously (for a summary, see Gyselen below), though the god Xwarrah would make the most sense in terms of the imagery and inscriptions (“Iran is strengthened,” “He who knows how to strengthen Iran,” “Iran makes [the territories of] the good religion grow”), because Iran was strengthened and the “good religion” was propagated through the ruler’s royal glory; T. Daryaei, “The Use of Religio-Political Propaganda of Xusrō II,” *AJNum* 9 (1997): 41–53; R. Gyselen, “Un dieu nimbé de flammes d’époque sassanide,” *IrAnt* 35 (2000): 291–314; S. Sears, “Monetary History of Iraq and Iran, ca. C.E. 500 to 750” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1997), 20–30. According to Sasanian thought, a ruler’s *xwarrah* could manifest itself symbolically as an animal or corporeally as light emanating from the ruler’s head and body; e.g., *Yt.* 19; *Kārnāmag ī Ardašīr* 1.8 (light from head), 4.10–24 (lightening or flame). Animal manifestations: see the collected Islamic-era sources in M. Abka‘i-Khavari, *Das Bild des Königs in der Sasanidenzeit*, Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik 13 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2000), 133–36. Tanabe attempts to put too fine a definition on the royal iconography and argues that the disk nimbus should be understood as the obscure Zoroastrian abstraction “endless light”; K. Tanabe, “A Study of the Sasanian Disk-Nimbus: A Farewell to Its *X^aarenah* Theory,” *Bulletin of the Ancient Orient Museum* 6 (1984): 29–50.

44. Nine Sasanian silver diplomatic plates in all contain images of sovereigns with a nimbus: Harper’s Group II—Cleveland Museum of Art “Hormozd Plate” (inv. 62.150), Metropolitan Museum of Art “Yazdegerd Plate” (inv. 1970.6), Metropolitan Museum of Art “Peroz/Qobād I Plate” (inv. 34.33), Hermitage Ufa Plate (inv. S297), Hermitage Strelka Plate (S250), Pushkin Museum Anikovska Plate; Group III—Hermitage Tcherdyne Plate (inv. S216); Group IV—Hermitage Pereshchepina Plate (inv. S215), Hermitage Nizhni Novgorod Plate (inv. S5).

45. Although later texts (the “vulgate tradition”: Diod. Sic. 17.77.6; Q. Curtius Rufius 6.6.4) and the modern scholarship that followed them over Iranian sources anachronistically understand the diadem to be part of the “Persian” royal dress that Alexander adopted, not a single primary source—text or image—exists that can attest to it. Although Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian kings regularly wear roughly similar headgear in portraits and palace reliefs, possibly forming the source of the Greek understanding that the “diadem” was standard “Oriental” regalia, the Achaemenid kings *never* appear in anything resembling a diadem in any surviving image, be it seal, coin, statue, or bas-relief sculpture. For Alexander: “In ‘origin’ it probably meant precisely nothing. In this lay its real value and success as a symbol. Originally empty of meaning, it could take on whatever significance Alexander gave it.” R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 34.

46. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 34–38; specifically Bactria: F. L. Holt, *Thundering Zeus: The Making of Hellenistic Bactria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

47. Like the nimbus, the diadem became a common attribute of the bodhisattva, evidently appropriated from Kušān ruler representation; M. Canepa, "The Problem of Indo-Scythian Art and Kingship: Evolving Images of Power and Royal Identity between the Iranian, Hellenistic, and South Asian Worlds," in *Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans*, ed. A. Alemany (Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, forthcoming).

48. Caesar was prepared to wear it outside Italy, and Augustus was depicted with it in cameos, yet neither they nor their immediate successors included it in official representations; Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," 145–47. Overview of the uses of Hellenistic kingship and Augustus's selective appropriation and later repudiation: P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. A. Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 5–77.

49. Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," 19–22.

50. M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 11–34.

51. This adoption of the diadem perhaps had some connection to the Sasanians, but it was more the charismatic, victorious kingship of Alexander that Gallienus wanted to appropriate, than the diadem as a Sasanian symbol of kingship; Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," 148.

52. R. R. R. Smith, "The Public Image of Licinius: Portrait Sculpture and Imperial Ideology in the Early Fourth Century," *JRS* 87 (1997): 184–94.

53. For Licinius, see Smith, "Public Image of Licinius," pl. 5.1 and 2.

54. Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," 149–50.

55. Ibid.; Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätantike*, 201–4.

56. Euseb. VC 5.6; "Aurelius Victory" *Epitome de Caes.* 41.13; Cedr. 1.517.7; Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 38; id., "Public Image of Licinius," 187.

57. Theoph. Simok. 5.2.7–3.8, trans. Whitby, 135–36.

58. Theoph. Simok. 5.3.8–9, trans. Whitby, 136.

59. Empresses wore red or purple bejeweled shoes, too; however, from the evidence in the San Vitale presbytery mosaic, it appears other aristocratic women could wear red shoes, too, and that it was only politically dangerous when men wore them. See chapter 7, note 154.

60. For example, the usurpation of Procopius; Amm. Marc. 26.6.15; Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," 175.

61. A pair of high leather boots excavated in Egypt derive from the dress of Persian cavalymen and might reflect the basic cut of the royal boots (Louvre inv. E 21388); *Perses sassanides*, cat. 115.

62. In a way, paralleling the origin and later development of the diadem.

63. On Hamza's sources, see Z. Rubin, "Hamza al-Isfahani's List of Sources for Iranian History and the Traces of Lost Sasanian Historiography" (paper presented at the Biennial of Iranian Studies, London, UK, 3–5 August 2006) <http://www.iranheritage.com/sixthbiennial/abstracts.htm>.

64. Hamza, 107.

65. Procop. *Aed.* 3.1.23. For the role of eunuchs in guarding and changing

the emperor into the *tzaggia* while seated in the apse of the Chrysotriklinos behind the veil before an audience, see K. M. Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 174.

66. For the date and the political effect of this event, see G. Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War, 502–532*, ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 37 (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1998), 132 ff.

67. Malal. 413.17; *Chron. Pasch.* 614; Theoph. 168.14–169.27.

68. Procop. *Aed.* 3.1.23. Regarding purple: ancient purple textiles or leather could vary in hue between red, blue, and purple; hence this repeated slippage between red and purple in the texts. The word “purple” (*purpura*, *porphyra*), however, retained a monopoly on imperial symbolism; M. McCormick, A. Kazhdan, and A. Cutler, “Purple,” *ODB* 3: 1759–60.

69. The word *tzaggion* entered Byzantine Greek as a regular, though not exclusive, reference to the Roman emperors’ red boots; A. Kazhdan, “Tzaggion,” *ODB* 3: 2135.

70. John Lydus provides the most detailed account of the *campagus* and describes it as “footwear, which had the form of the sandal, entirely open, by a kind of small rim closely binding the heel and the toes at the tip, straps being pulled through from each side under the arch of the foot up to the ankle bones, meeting each other crisscross upon the metatarsal and binding the foot, so that, while the shoe was visible very little both in the front at the toes and in the back, the whole foot, however, shone through because of the leggings.” Lydus *Mag.* 1.17 (30.21–32.2), trans. Bandy, 31–33.

71. Corippus (*In laud. Iust.* 2.100–11), in detailing Justin II’s costume, describes the imperial boots (*cothurni*) as purple and covering the calf, which might suggest a change in footwear. However, after mentioning the *cothurni* he says that the emperor put on the red thongs, which would thus seem to refer to the red *campagi*. Given the similarity in color to the purple *periskelides* and the red *campagi* in the San Vitale mosaic, it is more likely that Corippus uses the word *cothurnus* (recalling Vergil) as an archaic poetic substitute for *periskelides* than to indicate a total change in footwear. It is possible, however, that because of Roman contact with the Sasanian-type footwear, the details provided by Corippus reflect a point in its development at which the Roman court began to merge both elements into a single royal symbol and sartorial conglomerate, presaging later developments. “Only emperors under whose feet is the blood of kings can adopt this attire”; Corippus, trans. Cameron, 96 and 158 (commentary).

72. Menander, frag. 6.1.515–544. The basic gift-giving strategies developed by the late Roman and Sasanian courts continued to be an extremely important tool of statecraft in the medieval world. Several Islamic courts adopted this aspect of Sasanian court culture, along with others, and the Byzantine empire still cultivated similarly elaborate gifting strategies well into the fifteenth century. See C. J. Hilsdale, “Diplomacy by Design: Rhetorical Strategies of the Byzantine Gift” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2003); P. Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany: State University of New York

Press, 1994). On medieval Byzantine understandings of hierarchy and involvement in the Caucasus, Near East, and Western Europe, see the articles collected in the dossier “Byzance et Ses Voisins” in *Travaux et Mémoires* 13 (2000).

73. Malal. 17.10.12–13, ed. Thurn, 342 (= ed. Dindorf, 414). Nevertheless, this sort of activity continued into the seventh century. Chrysos provides a useful collection of sources on this phenomenon while considering the many rulers on the peripheries of the two powers; E. Chrysos, “The Title *Basileus* in Early Byzantine International Relations,” *DOP* 32 (1978): 29–75.

74. We have a greater volume of evidence regarding the “medallion style” from the Roman sphere than from elsewhere, and some have argued that it originated in the Roman empire; J. Trilling, *The Medallion Style: A Study in the Origins of Byzantine Taste*, Outstanding Dissertations in the Fine Arts (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985); however, as has been evident throughout this study, origin is largely irrelevant to subsequent significance. It quickly flourished in the visual cultures of both Rome and Sasanian Iran, as well as in areas on the peripheries of both empires, especially Central Asia. In short, the “medallion” or “pearl roundel” became a truly international motif that transcended its origins. Both visual cultures adapted its basic idea, that of enclosing figural imagery in a circular shape, to a variety of motifs stemming from both cultural realms, yet associated with Iranian court culture more than any other. See M. Compareti, “The Sasanians in Africa,” *Transoxiana* 4 (2002), <http://www.transoxiana.com.ar/0104/sasanians.html>; id., “Evidence of Mutual Exchange between Byzantine and Sogdian Art,” in *Persia e Bisanzio*, 865–922.

75. Unlike various motifs that appear in the Roman sphere, all these motifs have a deep cultural context and iconographical precedent in the Sasanian sphere; A. D. H. Bivar, “Sasanian Iconography on Textiles and Seals,” in *Central Asian Textiles and Their Contexts in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. R. Schorta, *Riggisberger Berichte* 6 (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2006), 5–22. However, we should not forget that this Persian sovereign was recently outfitted by the Roman court — another reason to concentrate on the implications of the convergence of motifs rather than their origins.

76. B. Marshak, “The So-Called Zandanjiji Silks: Comparisons with the Art of Sogdia,” in *Central Asian Textiles*, ed. Schorta, 49–60; V. Raspopova, “Textiles Represented in Sogdian Murals,” in *Central Asian Textiles*, ed. Schorta, 61–74; M. Yaldiz, “Die Rezeption von Textilmotiven in der indischen Kunst und ihr Einfluß auf die Malerei Xinjiangs,” in *Central Asian Textiles*, ed. Schorta, 81–100; Li Wenying, “Textiles of the Second to Fifth Century Unearthed from Yingpan Cemetery,” in *Central Asian Textiles*, ed. Schorta, 243–64; A. Jerusalimskaja, “Le caftan aux simourghs du tombeau de Mochtchevaja Balka (Caucase septentrional),” *StudIr* (1978): 183–211.

77. Although they did not situate H. Polyeuktos’s Sasanian-inspired ornament in the sociocultural circumstances that drove its production (nor was it their intention to do so), these studies have represented an important step forward insofar as they have detailed the integral impact that the ornament had on later Byzantine architectural developments and the foreign material’s important

place in the development of late Roman ornament; C. Strube, *Polyeuktoskirche und Hagia Sophia: Umbildung und Auflösung antiker Formen, Entstehen des Kämpferkapitells*. Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Abhandlungen, n.s. 92. (Munich: Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984); E. Russo, "La scultura di S. Polieucto e la presenza della Persia nella cultura artistica di Costantinopoli nel VI secolo," in *Persia e Bisanzio*, 737–826.

78. Russo, "La scultura di S. Polieucto," 737–826.

79. O. Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts 38, Bollingen Series 35. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 230.

80. Theoph. Simok. 5.6.10, trans. Whitby, 240; there is no reason to doubt the basic veracity of this passage, though perhaps its scope.

81. Erdmann, "Die universalgeschichtliche Stellung der sassanidischen Kunst," 508–34; Mango, "Storia del arte," 319–21; id., "Harrison, Temple for Byzantium," *JRS* 81 (1991): 237–38; Strübe, *Polyeuktoskirche und Hagia Sophia*; R. M. Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium: The Discovery and Excavation of Anicia Juliana's Palace-Church in Istanbul* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 122.

82. The notion of early Byzantine ornament organically and uninterruptedly evolving from classical ornament stems from R. Kautzsch's *Kapitellstudien* (1936), which sought to document the development of the classical capital, and, of course, A. Riegl's *Stilfragen* (1893). Riegl largely ignored the remains of H. Polyeuktos, known then only from such Venetian *spolia* as the "Pilastris Acritani," and attributed similarities between Sasanian and early Byzantine palmette motifs to Constantinople's influence on Ctesiphon (pp. 297–302). Kautzsch's monumental endeavor became problematic, too, when it reached late antiquity. Here he continued to impose a linear developmental organization on late Roman column capitals, at times relying for evidence of date solely on his evolutionary hypothesis, which owed quite a bit to Riegl's *Stilfragen*. E. Kitzinger mimicked this sort of reasoning, citing Kautzsch's tidy evolutionary order as proof of his own conviction that late antique decorative sculpture changed according to an "almost irresistible inner logic"; E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making: Main Lines of Stylistic Development in Mediterranean Art, 3rd–7th Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 79. While later editions of Krautheimer's *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* integrated the problem of H. Polyeuktos's Sasanian-inspired ornament and its impact on Justinian's churches, these notions of Byzantine ornament's "organic unity" still occasionally reappear; R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 228.

83. For the peacocks in particular, see J.-P. Sodini, "Les paons d Saint-Polyeucte et leurs modèles," in *AETOS: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango Presented to Him on April 14, 1998*, ed. I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (Stuttgart and Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1998), 306–13.

84. M. Canepa, "The Two Eyes of the Earth: Competition and Exchange in the Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004); Russo, "La scultura di S. Polieucto," 765.

85. Canepa, "Competition and Exchange"; Russo, "La scultura di S. Polieucto," 764–66, 776–78.

86. Whereas Grabar, Deichman, and Harrison adhered to Strzygowski's and Diehl's original assumption that H. Polyeuktos's craftsmen absorbed the motifs piecemeal from a sundry collection of moveable sumptuary objects, Strube looked to actual Sasanian architectural ornament; A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople*, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie d'Istanbul 17 (Paris: Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1963), 64; F. W. Deichmann, "I pilastri acritani," *RendPontAcc* 50 (1977–1978): 88; Harrison, *Temple for Byzantium*, 122; Strzygowski, "Antiochische Kunst," 421; C. Diehl, *Manuel d'art byzantine* (Paris: Auguste Pickard, 1925–26), 1: 49; Strube, *Polyeuktoskirche und Hagia Sophia*, 63–74.

87. Mango, "Storia del arte," 321; followed by Canepa, "Competition and Exchange"; Russo, "La scultura di S. Polieucto."

88. C. Capizzi, "Anicia Giuliana (462 ca–530 ca): Ricerche sulla sua famiglia e la sua vita," *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neellenici* 15, no. 5 (1968): 191–226; Mango, "Storia del arte," 319; Harrison, *Temple for Byzantium*, 36–41; G. Fowden, "Constantine, Silvester, and the Church of S. Polyeuktos in Constantinople," *JRA* 7 (1994): 274–84; C. Milner, "Image of the Rightful Ruler," in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries*, ed. P. Magdalino (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), 73–92; C. L. Connor, "The Epigram in the Church of Hagios Polyeuktos in Constantinople and Its Byzantine Response," *Byzantion* 69, no. 2 (1999): 479–527; L. Brubaker, "The Vienna Dioskorides and Anicia Juliana," in *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. A. Littlewood, H. Maguire, and J. Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 189–214; B. Kiilerich, "The Image of Anicia Juliana in the Vienna Dioscurides: Flattery or Appropriation of Imperial Imagery?" *SOsl* 76 (2001): 169–90.

89. *PLRE* 2: 635–36.

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*

92. *Ibid.* 143–44.

93. Harrison, *Temple for Byzantium*, 36–41; Mango, "Storia del arte," 472; Kiilerich, "Image of Anicia Juliana," *passim*.

94. H. Polyeuktos's excavator, Martin Harrison, initially dismissed the possibility that the church might present any clear religious or political statement; R. M. Harrison, *Excavations at Saraçhane in Istanbul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 1: 417; Fowden, "Constantine, Silvester, and the Church of S. Polyeuktos," 274. However, in his later publications Harrison argued that Anicia Juliana intended H. Polyeuktos to evoke the temple of Solomon and that "her motive would have been to demonstrate her royal pretensions: for Solomon was the most kingly of kings and he had been crowned by Zadok the priest"; Har-

riation, *Temple for Byzantium*, 139; id., "The Church of St. Polyeuktos in Istanbul and the Temple of Solomon," in *Okeanos: Studies Presented to Ihor Sevcenko*, Harvard Ukrainian Studies 7 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 76–79. In 1993 Christine Milner expanded and modified this biblical view and proposed that with H. Polyeuktos Anicia Juliana sought to create Ezekiel's heavenly temple, and argued that Anicia Juliana attempted to "not only materialize, but also appropriate, the great abstract ideal temple of early Christian theology"; Milner, "Image of the Rightful Ruler," 81–82. This allusion is indeed possible, but not necessarily exclusive or fundamental to the structure. This strain of discourse, which some have also tried to apply to the church of Hagia Sophia, as well as to Byzantine kingship in general, assumes that biblical prototypes provided the most attractive structural and ideological models for late antique aristocrats, as they did for medieval Byzantine grandees, despite serious anachronism as well as overly privileging textual evidence over the other modes of expression that conveyed meaning, namely, visual modes; see G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Étude sur le 'Césaropapisme' byzantine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 20.

95. In his 1994 article Garth Fowden concentrated on how the Constantinian baptismal mosaic commented on historical events that Anicia Juliana had some hand in bringing to pass, namely, a doctrinal rapprochement between the emperor Justin and the papacy in 519. In this article, Fowden exhibits a more even approach than Milner to H. Polyeuktos's multiple messages. He characterizes H. Polyeuktos as a monument to Roman prestige in the East, both culturally, in terms of the traditions of the Old Rome of the *gens* Anicia's illustrious past, and religiously, as a monument to the Chalcedonian orthodoxy that Juliana and the Roman papacy succeeded in reestablishing in Constantinople. Regarding the Solomonic allusions (which he accepted as more likely than allusions to Ezekiel), Fowden stated that though "a few *cognoscenti* may have recognized that it was a Solomonic temple too, its connections with Rome were probably more widely perceived and appreciated than its echoes of Jerusalem." He remarked that "comparisons with Solomon's temple were apt anyway to boomerang in the Christian context." Fowden, "Constantine, Silvester, and the Church of S. Polyeuktos," 281–82 and n. 50.

96. Josh. Styl. 55–56.

97. Theoph. 5997, trans. Mango, 225.

98. Canepa, "Competition and Exchange," 426.

99. Mango, "Storia del arte," 320–21.

100. C. D. Sheppard, "A Radiocarbon Date for the Wooden Tie Beams in the West Gallery of St. Sophia, Istanbul," *DOP* 19 (1965): 237–40.

101. For an overview of surviving Sasanian or post-Sasanian textiles, see D. Bénazeth's chapter and catalogue in *Perses sassanides*, 157–81.

102. See detailed plates in S. Fukai and K. Horiuchi, *Taq-i Bustan*, 2 vols, Tokyo University Iraq-Iran Archaeological Expedition Report 10 and 13 (Tokyo: Yamakawa, 1969 and 1972).

103. J. Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor*, Baghdader Forschungen 5 (Mainz:

Philip von Zabern, 1982), 241–42. Warahrān (Mid. Pers.; Av.) Vərə[r]ayna), the hypostasis of victory and controlled violence used to smash through any obstacle and destroy all evil: G. Gnoli, “Bahrām i: In Old and Middle Iranian Texts,” *Elr* (1993) 3: 510–13; P. Jamzadeh, “Bahrām, ii: Representations in Iranian Art,” *Elr* (1989) 3: 513–14.

104. G. Azarpay, “Sasanian Art beyond the Persian World,” in *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Parthian and Sasanian Periods: Rejection and Revival*, 238 B.C.–A.D. 642, ed. J. Curtis (London: British Museum Press, 2000), 67–75. M. Compareti, “Iranian Elements in Kaśmīr and Tibet Sasanian and Sogdian Borrowings in Kashmiri and Tibetan Art,” *Transoxiana* 14 (2009): http://www.transoxiana.org/14/compareti_iranian_elements_kashmir.html.

105. Azarpay, “Sasanian Art Beyond the Persian World,” 67–75.

106. “Justinian provided Chosroes son of Kabades with Greek marble, building experts, and craftsmen skilled in ceilings, and that a palace situated close to Ctesiphon was constructed for Chosroes with Roman expertise.” Theoph. Simok. 5.6.10, trans. Whitby, 240.

107. J. Kröger, “Ctesiphon,” *Elr* (1993) 6: 447.

108. *Ibid.*

109. These were possibly associated with the massive unfinished rock relief and terrace, the Tarāš-e Farhād near Bisotūn; E. Herzfeld, *Am Tor von Asien* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1920), 110; K. Erdmann, “Die Kapitelle am Taq i Bostan,” *MDOG* 80 (1943): 1–24; H. Luschej, “Zur Datierung der sasanidischen Kapitelle aus Bisutun und des Monuments von Taq-i-Bostan,” *AMI* n.s. 1 (1968): 129–42; *id.*, “Bisotūn ii: Archaeology,” *Elr* (1990) 4: 291–99.

110. Mackintosh argued that Sasanian frontality and the arrangement of the figures in the *ayvān* derived from the church decoration of Byzantine apses—an assertion that is anachronistic. In contrast to the winged Victories, which were not a terribly common Iranian motif, Sasanian art inherited a richly developed tradition of royal frontality and *ayvān* decoration from the Parthians, which they continued to develop over the course of their history. M. Mackintosh, “Taq-i Bustan and Byzantine Art: A Case for Early Byzantine Influence on the Reliefs of Taq-i Bustan,” *IrAnt* 13 (1978): 149–77.

111. Its placement next to the smaller *ayvān* of Šāpūr III and its unfinished state suggest that its designers intended it to evoke a triple-bayed Roman triumphal arch, a triple *ayvān* Sasanian palace, or—most likely—both; B. Musche, “Römische Einflüsse auf den Taq-e Bostan,” in *Beiträge zur Altorientalischen Archäologie und Altertumskunde, Festschrift für Barthel Hrouda zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. P. Calmeyer et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 193–99.

112. The Romans were not alone in this regard. Sasanian motifs ornament the clothing of several Central Asian, and even Chinese, rulers in many near-contemporary representations, not to mention actual textiles from these regions incorporating such motifs; J. Ebert, “The Dress of Queen Svayaprabhā from Kuča, Sasanian, and Other Influences in the Robes of Royal Donors Depicted in Wall Paintings of the Tarim Basin,” in *Central Asian Textiles*, ed. Schorta,

101–16; A. Heller, “Recent Findings on Textiles from the Tibetan Empire,” in *Central Asian Textiles*, ed. Schorta, 175–88. Compareti, “Iranian Elements in Kaśmīr and Tibet.”

EPILOGUE: THE LEGACY

OF THE TWO EYES OF THE EARTH

1. W. Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 277–99; P. Pourshariati, *The Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 1–2.

2. Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium*, 207–8; E. G. Pulleyblank, “Chinese-Iranian Relations i: In Pre-Islamic Times,” *Elr* (1992): 5: 424–31.

3. The information on the Sasanian court, as well as the Zoroastrian community, in such texts as the *Šāhnāma*, *Fārsnāma*, Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, and Ps.-al-Jāhīz, owes its preservation to the *dehḡān* class’s cultivation of the culture of pre-Islamic Iran; A. Tafazzolī, “Dehḡān i: In the Sasanian Period,” *Elr* (suppl.); J. K. Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

4. G. Fowden, *Qusayr ‘Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 36 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); A. Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian, and Pagan Polities* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1997); P. Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994); *CambHistIr* (1975): 4: 85, 132, 136, 145–49, 165, 185, 198–200, 274–79. An impressive study of the afterlife and reinvention of Persian architecture and culture in post-conquest Iran and Central Asia: Melanie Michailidis, “Landmarks of the Persian Renaissance: Monumental Funerary Architecture in Iran and Central Asia in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries” (Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2007).

5. Important edited volumes: P. Magdalino, ed., *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries* (Ashgate: Variorum, 1994); L. Brubaker, ed., *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* (Ashgate: Variorum, 1996). A tenth-century mosaic added to an entrance cut into the southwest wall of the inner narthex of the then ancient church of Hagia Sophia depicts a Middle Byzantine vision of the past. The mosaic neatly expresses the development of Roman concepts of kingship in the Middle Ages; R. Nelson, *Hagia Sophia, 1850–1950: Holy Wisdom, Modern Monument* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 9–13.

6. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. G. Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), 77–109.

7. A. Grabar, “Le rayonnement de l’art sassanide dans le monde chrétien,” *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Quaderno* 160 (1971): 686–88.

8. F. W. Buckler, *Harunu’l-Rashid and Charles the Great* (Cambridge, Mass.:

Mediæval Academy of America, 1931), 51–52; P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, A.D. 150–750* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989), 203; A. Grabar, “Le succès des arts orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens,” *MünchJb* 3 (1951): 32–60.

9. Buckler, *Harunu'l-Rashid and Charles the Great*, 32–42.

10. A useful collection of Anthony Cutler's most important studies on this topic: A. Cutler, *Image Making In Byzantium, Sasanian Persia, and The Early Muslim World: Images and Cultural Relations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); id., “The Emperor's Old Clothes: Actual and Virtual Vesting and the Transmission of Power in Byzantium and Islam,” in eds. M. Balard, É. Malamut, and J.-M. Spieser, *Byzance et le monde extérieur: Contacts, relations, échanges* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2005), 195–210; id., “Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies,” *DOP* 55 (2001): 247–78; id., “Imagination and Documentation: Eagle Silks in Byzantium, the Latin West and Abbasid Baghdad,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 96 (2003): 67–72.

See also H. Keshani, “The ‘Abbāssid Palace of Theophilus: Byzantine Taste for the Arts of Islam,” *Al-Masaq* 16.1 (2004): 75–91; D. Jacoby, “Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West,” *DOP* 58 (2004): 197–240; A. Shalem, “Objects as Carriers or Contrived Memories in a Cross-Cultural Context: The Case of Medieval Diplomatic Presents,” in *Migrating Images*, ed. P. Stegmann and P. C. Seel (Berlin: House of World Cultures, 2004), 36–52; id., “Manipulations of Seeing and Visual Strategies in the Audience Halls of the Early Islamic Period: Preliminary Notes,” in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft*, BYZAS 5, ed. F. A. Bauer (Istanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2006), 213–32; A. R. Littlewood, “Gardens of the Palaces,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 25 n. 89; N. P. Ševčenko, “Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park,” in *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. A. Littlewood, H. Maguire, and J. Wolschke-Bulman (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 69–86; O. Grabar, “The Shared Culture of Objects,” in *Byzantine Court Culture*, ed. Maguire, 114–29; F. Eagman and Z. Tanindi, “Remarks on Some Manuscripts from the Topkapi Palace Treasure in the Context of Ottoman-Safavid Relations,” *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 132–48; G. Necipoğlu, “Süleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry,” *ArtB* 71.3 (1989): 401–27; R. Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations: A Study of the Political and Diplomatic Relations between the Mughal Empire and Iran* (Tehran: Iranian Cultural Foundation, 1971); N. R. Farooqi, *Mughal-Ottoman Relations* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi, 1989). Tang China, where the Sasanians took refuge and in whose court the remnants of the dynasty served, was deeply imprinted by Sasanian court culture and Iranian culture in general; M. Compareti, “The Last Sasanians in China,” *Eurasian Studies* 2.2 (2003): 203; M. Canepa, “Distant Displays of Power,” in *Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction among the Ancient and Early Medieval Mediterranean, Near East, and Asia*, ed. M. Canepa, *Arts Orientalis* 38 (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery, Smithsonian, 2007).

11. The fourth Mughal emperor, Jahāngir, intended his first official act to

emulate Justinian I's rival, Kōsrow I, stringing a chain of justice (*zanjir-e ādl*) from the riverbank to the court to provide a direct means of contacting the sovereign, bypassing any potential interference with corrupt courtiers; *Jahāngir-name*, trans. Thackston, 5; L. Balabanlilar, "Jahāngir," *EIr*. On the continued use of *automata* in Constantinople and Baghdad of the type employed in Kōsrow I's audience hall, see Grabar, "Le succès des arts orientaux," 56; G. Brett, "The Automata in the Byzantine 'Throne of Solomon,'" *Speculum* 29.3 (1954): 477–87; J. Trilling, "Daedalus and the Nightingale: Art and Technology in the Myth of the Byzantine Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture*, ed. Maguire, 228–30; T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 82–88.

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with Roman captives. Šāpūr I recorded his capture of the city in his ŠKZ inscription and incorporated Roman architectural ornament in his palace at Bišāpūr. Ȳosrow I’s Weh-antiōg-husraw was especially lavish and included Roman baths and a hippodrome. If a late, tertiary source can be believed, Ȳosrow I even portrayed the capture of the city in his Ayyvāne Kesrā in Ctesiphon. *See* al-Qazvīni, *Āṭār al-bilād*, 454–55; Fowden 2004, 222.): Bišāpūr palace complex and, 75; deportation and resettlement of communities from, 43, 174, 244n119, 244n121; diplomatic exchanges at, 131; sacks of, 43, 54, 173; Weh-antiōg-husraw as recreation of, 13, 138–44, 140, 208, 210, 211, 221

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to a site on one of the main routes
between the Iranian plateau and
Mesopotamia. It was the site of
rock reliefs from the Achaemenid,
Hellenistic, and Arsacid eras.
Nearby, was discovered a Sasanian
hunting paradise, sculpted column
capitals as well as an large artificial
terrace and unfinished rock relief,
started by Kōsrow II to serve as a
colossal rock cut *ayvān* and audi-
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churches and a palace. It lay outside
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literally ‘four arches.’ It is used in
scholarship as a technical term to
refer to a range of square structures
with four masonry piers often
pierced with arched niches, window
openings or vaulted doorways and
crowned by a dome on squinches.
Along with the *ayvān*, this archi-
tectural form served as one of
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Palace of Constantinople. The
Chalke Gate controlled the main
entrance into the grounds of Great
Palace. It was a highly symbolic and
richly decorated structure rebuilt
several times, most significantly
under Justinian I.), 85, 130, 133,
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- Takt-e Jamšēd (N. Pers. toponym for the ruins of the Achaemenid palace of Persepolis.). *See* Persepolis
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- fortune of the righteous and rightful Iranian king. Inhabiting every rightful Aryan ruler since the first king of humanity, Yima Xšaēta (Mid. Pers. Jamšēd), *xwarrah* is a divine force that imbues the sovereign with irresistible victorious power, fortune and wisdom. It can take several theriomorphic forms in which it alights on rightful rulers or flees from unjust rulers and non-Iranian usurpers. In the Sasanian era, the possession of *xwarrah* was thought to manifest, among other ways, as a bodily glow, especially a glow around a ruler's head.), 69, 94, 101, 157, 158, 185, 193, 195, 263n37, 265n56, 281n11, 325–26n43; hypostasis of, 158, 326n43
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PLATES



PLATE I. Women gathering grain, prehistoric fresco from Tassili n'Ajjer, Algeria, ca. 2000 B.C.E.

SOURCE: Henry Lhote Collection, Musée de l'Homme, Paris. Photo © 1966 Erich Lessing, Art Resource, New York.



PLATE 2. *Transport des nègres dans les colonies* (Transport of negroes in the colonies), color lithograph by Prétextat Oursel, early 1800s.

SOURCE: Photo by Michel Dupuis, Ville de Saint-Malo. Reprinted with the permission of the Musée d'histoire, Saint-Malo, France.

PLATE 3. Illustration of the Danish slave ship *Fredensborg*, ca. 1785.

SOURCE: Reprinted with permission of the Danish Maritime Museum, Kronborg, Denmark.



PLATE 4. Illustration of slaves washing for diamonds at Mandango on the River Jequitinhonha in Serra do Frio, Minas Gerais, Brazil, by Carlos Julião, ca. 1776.

SOURCE: Reprinted in Cunha, *Riscos iluminados de figurinhos de brancos e negros*, pl. 42.



PLATE 5. Illustration of *plátano guineo* (banana) and guavas, by Joaquín Antonio de Basarás y Garaygorta, 1763.

SOURCE: Basarás y Garaygorta, "Origen, costumbres, y estado presente de mexicanos y philipinos" (unpublished ms., 1763). Courtesy of the Hispanic Society of America, New York.



PLATE 6. Illustrations of grass and milk vendors, Rio de Janeiro, by Carlos Julião, ca. 1776. Note the punishment collar worn by the man on the right.

SOURCE: Cunha, *Riscos iluminados de figurinhos de brancos e negros*, pl. 34.



PLATE 7. *El panadero y el malojero* (The bread seller and the fodder seller), Havana, Cuba, by Pierre Toussaint Frédéric Miahle, ca. 1847–48.

SOURCE: Pierre Toussaint Frédéric Miahle, *Album pintoresco de la isla de Cuba* (Havana, 1850), in Handler and Tuite, “Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record,” database at University of Virginia Library, image ref.: album-13.



PLATE 8. Illustration of female food vendors, colonial Brazil, by Carlos Julião, ca. 1776.

SOURCE: Cunha, *Riscos iluminados de figurinhos de brancos e negros*, pl. 33.